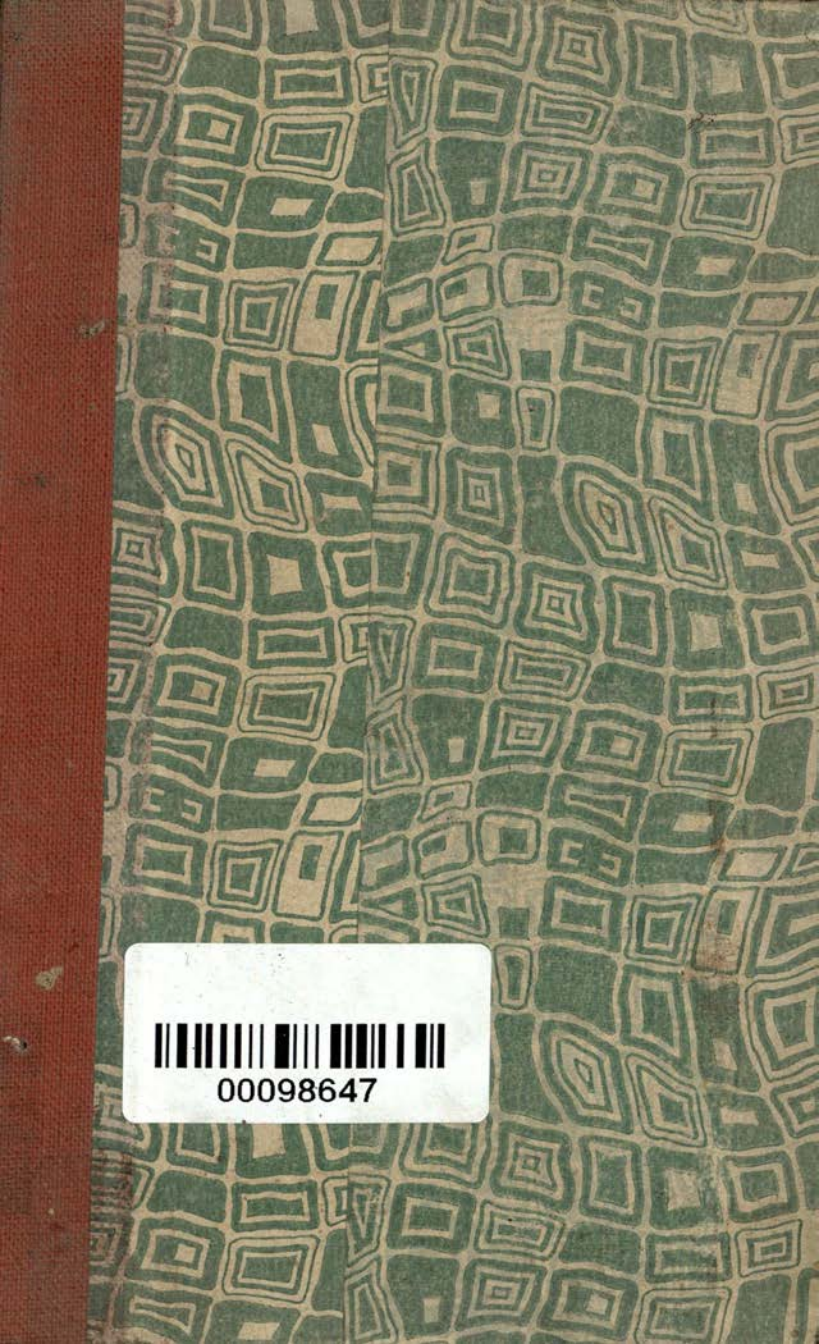
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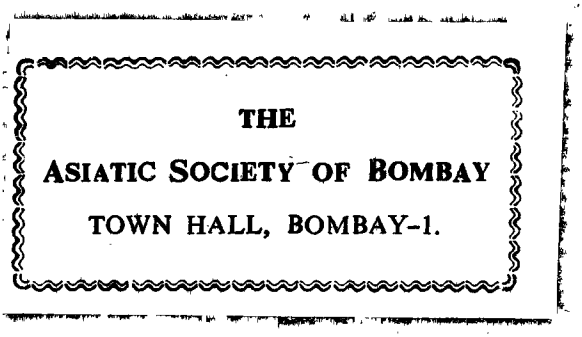

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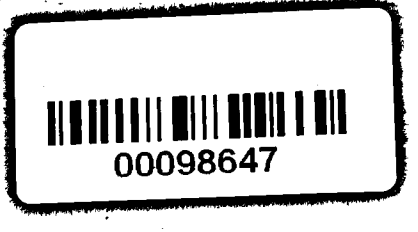

NNo 38

TO THE ATTENTION OF

THAT MAJORITY SPOKEN OF BY CARLYLE

AND WHICH MAY BE SAID TO INCLUDE

ALL GAMBLERS

THIS BOOK IS PARTICULARLY ADDRESSED

BY THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

In presenting the following pages to the public, I have had in view a very serious purpose. Here and there may be found a few words spoken in jest; but throughout my aim has been particularly earnest.

This book, in fact, tends to point a moral, and present a problem. The moral is obvious, the problem is ethical; which is, perhaps, only another way of saying something different.

In the realm of Ethics, the two men who exert, probably, the greatest influence upon the mass of humanity are the philosopher and the politician. Yet, strange to say, there would appear to be little that can be considered as common knowledge in either politics or philosophy. Every politician and every philosopher holds opinions which are diametrically opposed to those of some other politician or philosopher; and there never yet existed, apparently, either politician or philosopher who would admit even that his opponents were acquainted with the

fact of two and two making four. So much, then, for dogmatism.

In the natural order of events, however, there must be things which even a politician can understand. Not many things, perhaps ; but still some things. In like manner, there must be things which even a philosopher can *not* understand—and a great many things.

As an illustration, let us take the case of 'sharping.' Politician and philosopher alike are interested in the origin of crime, its development, and the means of its prevention. Now, even a politician can understand that a man, having in view the acquisition of unearned increment, may take to cheating as being a ready means of possessing himself of the property of others, with but little effort upon his own part. At the same time, I will venture to say that not even a philosopher can render any adequate reason for the fact that some men will devote an amount of energy, labour, perseverance and ingenuity to the gaining of a precarious living in the paths of chicanery, one-half of which, if directed into legitimate channels, would serve to place them in a position commanding both affluence and respect.

To my mind, the only hypothesis which in any way covers the facts of the case is that some men are *born* to crime. It is their destiny, and they are bound to fulfil it.

Whether this hypothesis represents the solution of the problem or not is a bone of contention over which I am

content to allow others to quarrel, without joining in the fray. I am only concerned with the facts as we know them—the plain and unmistakable facts that cheating, upon a gigantic scale, *does* exist ; that the resources available for its advancement become every day more numerous, whilst the means of its prevention become more and more inadequate.

A goodly portion of my life has been spent in battling with superstition, credulity and chicanery in every form. It has been a labour of love with me. At times I have, so to speak, cried from the house-top truths so obvious that there hardly seemed any necessity for calling attention to them, and yet have found some who could not believe them. Again and again, Time, the prover of all things, has without exception borne out my statements to the very letter ; yet even now there are some who will prefer to rely upon the word of a charlatan—an impostor—rather than accept a plain statement of palpable facts at my hands. It is curious, but nevertheless it is true. It is magnificent, but it is not common sense. Fortunately, however, there are not many such, though some there are.

Experience has demonstrated that the ignorance of the public with regard to the capabilities of trickery is the principal factor in all problems connected with every kind of deception. If the public only knew a little more in this respect, the thousand-and-one quackeries

which flourish in our midst could not exist. My self-imposed task, then, has ever been to endeavour to educate the public, just a little, and to enlighten those who really seek for truth amid the noxious and perennial weeds of humbug and pretence. In this, I am happy to say, I have to some extent succeeded ; but there is still much to be done.

This book, then, is but another stone, as it were, in an edifice raised for the purpose of showing to the world the real nature of those things which are not really what they appear to be, and practices with the very existence of which the average man is unacquainted.

Although the immediate practical outcome of this book may be *nil*, I shall not be depressed upon that account. If it only has the effect of opening the eyes of the authorities to some extent, and of hinting a caution to gamblers generally, I shall be content ; and, commending it to the public with this reflection, and with the hope that this much, at least, may be accomplished, I leave it to its fate.

J. N. MASKELYNE.

EGYPTIAN HALL, LONDON, W.
February 1894.

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SHARPS AND FLATS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THAT 'it requires all kinds of men to make a world,' is an aphorism which may or may not be gainsaid, according to the aspect in which it is regarded. For whilst, on the one hand, we are painfully cognisant of the fact that this world, as we find it, is composed of 'all sorts and conditions of men,' and among them not a few sorts with which we could very readily dispense, still, on the other hand, the idea of a world with some of the existing components omitted is by no means inconceivable. Do we not, in fact, every day of our lives, meet with schemes, philanthropic and otherwise, formulated expressly for the regeneration of man? Yes, we know them of old; those schemes which, according to their gifted authors, are to elevate mankind to one universal level of goodness and purity. Sad to say, however, in spite of

these well-meant efforts, continued from time immemorial, mankind would appear to be in about the same unregenerate condition as ever. The 'kinds of men' seem to multiply rather than to diminish, and the long-deferred millennium looms as far off in the dim and distant future as at any period of the world's history.

Accepting, then, this many-sided world of ours as an established fact, impossible of modification, it is obvious that, to quote another time-honoured proverb, and say that 'one half the world does not know how the other half lives,' is to convey but a very feeble and inadequate idea of the real facts of the case. All things considered, it may be safely said that the majority know far too little of the means of subsistence employed by their fellows, and, in consequence, often suffer for that lack of knowledge. The fact is, too many of us possess the gentleness of the dove (more or less) without the qualifying and ever-necessary wisdom of the serpent.

Among the bye-paths of existence, among the various underhand methods of obtaining a living—sweet little conceptions evolved, presumably, from the primordial basis of original sin - probably there is none so little understood by the community at large as the art and practice of 'sharping.' At the same time, it is not too much to say that there is no subject more worthy of serious consideration, when regarded in the relation it holds to the moral well-being of mankind in general.

It is, of course, common knowledge that there are in existence individuals who live by cheating at games of chance and skill, but few persons have any idea of the extent to which the practice obtains, or of the number of the professors of this particular branch of swindling.

Possibly, of the work-a-day inhabitants of this planet, nine persons out of ten of the majority who are 'indifferent honest,' will be inclined to a belief that sharping, at the worst, can form but a very insignificant factor in the social problems of modern times. A glance at the contents of this book, however, will serve to remove that very erroneous impression. The author is not raising a 'bogey' for the purpose of pretending to demolish it. The spectre is a very substantial one indeed, and the task of 'laying' it is far beyond the power of any one man to accomplish.

The system, in fact, is a gigantic one, and its professors are legion. It is as thriving an industry (save the mark) as any in the world. It is as perfectly organised in every department as any legitimate business. Its markets are regulated by the same inexorable laws of supply and demand, competition and coöperation, which govern the development of every branch of commerce. It has its manufacturers, its wholesale houses, its canvassers and retail dealers, all in regular form. Its price-lists, descriptive pamphlets, circulars and advertisements are issued as methodically as those of *bonâ fide* merchants and

traders. Its ramifications extend to every quarter of the globe.

This book will show that not only is a thriving trade in cheating utensils carried on openly and unblushingly, but also that there must be an enormous number of swindlers at large, who live by means of unfair practices in connection with all forms of gambling; sharps who are still undetected, and, notwithstanding the vigilance of the authorities, are still pursuing their calling under the very eyes of Justice.

Startling as these statements may appear to the uninitiated, of their absolute truth there cannot exist the slightest doubt in the mind of anyone who will take the trouble to glance through these pages. This book, in fact, may be regarded as 'The Sharp's Vade Mecum, or a Theoretical and Practical Treatise on the Art and Practice of Cheating.' No pains have been spared to make it as complete as possible, and, if advantage be taken of the instructions it contains, and any person of dishonest tendencies utilises the same for the purpose of swindling his fellow-men, it will be entirely the fault of those who have not profited by the information which the author has given.

That the condition of affairs herein revealed should be found to exist in the midst of our boasted civilisation is a fact which is, to say the least, deplorable. Further, it is a fact which urgently demands that every possible

effort should be made towards its mitigation by those who may find themselves in a position to obtain information respecting these nefarious practices, and to throw light into the recesses of this obscure phase of human nature.

By far the major portion of the details given in these pages have never before been made public. Even among exponents of legitimate legerdemain, there are very few who have any cognisance of them whatever. It is obvious that a professional illusionist having a reputation for 'squareness' is at a decided disadvantage in seeking for information of this kind. The author, for instance, being so well known to the swindling fraternity as an exposer of frauds, could not possibly have acquired without assistance the countless minutiæ which have come into his possession. The very suspicion that he was engaged in such an investigation would be sufficient to dry up all sources of information, and to remove all possibility of arriving at anything of moment. He has therefore to acknowledge his indebtedness for much that is valuable to a friend who desires to be nameless. In the assumed guise of an English 'sharp,' this gentleman has pursued his investigations to such good purpose that he has gained a fund of information relative to 'sharps and sharping,' which may be fairly said to include all the most important methods employed at the present day. The information so obtained has been freely drawn upon in the production of this book.

The head-quarters of this abominable system of wholesale robbery are to be sought for in the land which has bestowed upon civilisation so many blessings of a similar character. From the spirit-medium to the wooden nutmeg, they all hail from that most 'go-ahead,' and yet most easily hoodwinked country, America. True, there are so many dunderheads of all nationalities who can never realise the truth of that simple maxim which teaches that 'honesty is the best policy,' and such a very large proportion of these have turned their steps to America, that it is, perhaps, hardly fair to regard them as an integral part of the American nation. Still there they are, and it behoves America to grasp the situation with a much firmer hand than heretofore, with a view to the suppression of these pernicious creatures, and of attaining a reputation more in accord with her honourable traditions—more worthy of the great names associated with her history.

There is every reason for believing that at the present moment England is the happy hunting-ground of the swindling fraternity, and for this reason. In America many of the older frauds are tolerably well-known to those who are addicted to gambling, but over here most of these things are absolutely unknown. Even the English sharp himself is in a condition of unsophisticated innocence compared with his American rival.

It is certain that our ocean steamboats are infested

with gangs of men, provided with these means of relieving their fellow-passengers of superfluous cash. And in all probability, every one of our 'swellest' clubs possesses at least one member who makes a good living by the use of methods and contrivances never dreamt of by his dupes. It is true, the 'Dudley Smooths' of to-day are no longer cold-blooded duellists who can overawe their victims with the dread of sword and pistol, but they are quite as keen as they ever were, and their resources are infinitely greater than formerly.

Of course there is not the slightest necessity for anyone, however foolish, to fall a victim to the wiles of the sharper in any game either of skill or chance. There is no reason why the greatest simpleton alive should ever be cheated of his money. There is one golden rule, the observance of which must utterly checkmate the most cunning swindler. It is a rule by which the author has always been guided, and one which, were it universally adopted, would banish the cheat and his paraphernalia from the face of the earth. It is a system which is easily learned and which requires no skill in execution. It is simply to abstain from every form of gambling whatever. Make up your mind that 'you want no man's money, and that no man shall have yours,'[1] and you cannot come to much harm in this direction.

[1] Quotation from the late Earl Fitz-Hardinge, a most ardent sportsman.

It would seem, however, that there is a kind of fatal fascination in gambling which some persons appear to be wholly unable to resist. It is therefore quite as well that those who *will* indulge in such an expensive propensity should do so, at least, with their eyes open. On this account, if for no other reason, the publication of this book is fully justified, and any apology for its appearance would be superfluous.

No attempt has been made to deal with the subject historically. Quite sufficient scope is afforded for a work of this kind in the undertaking to set forth an account of such frauds as are practised at the present day. Our attention therefore will be chiefly directed towards devices which are of recent invention, together with those that have survived in practice from former times.

The originals of the various circulars &c., reprints of which are given in the following pages, are in the author's possession. The names and addresses of the firms from which they emanate are, however, for very obvious reasons, omitted from these reprints, though all else is given verbatim. The illustrations are all taken from actual articles, purchased for the avowed purpose of cheating by their means. The reader will thus be enabled to gather some idea as to the amount of misplaced ingenuity which has been brought to bear upon the production of these *fin-de-siècle* appliances for robbing the unwary.

This much, then, having been said by way of introduction, we may at once proceed to consider systematically the methods of the modern 'sharp;' and to describe, for the first time in any language, the various mechanical and other devices he uses, and the manner in which they are employed.

CHAPTER II

COMMON SHARPERS AND THEIR TRICKS

In dealing with a subject of so wide a character as that upon which we are engaged, the difficulty of beginning at the beginning is greater than may appear to a casual reader. There are so many points from which it may be attacked. As to treating of all that is known in reference to it, or tracing it back to the earliest records, that, of course, is out of the question in the limited space at our disposal. Even were one historically inclined, who can say where the beginning begins. Doubtless, one would have to search the geological formations at great depth in order to discover remains of that man who first conceived the idea of correcting fickle fortune at the expense of his fellows. If science ever achieves this discovery, we shall certainly have reasonable grounds for believing that we have found a very near relative of Adam.

Although the general public have so little acquaintance with the higher developments of cheating, still, a great deal has been written concerning some of the more elementary

methods. This being so, the question of what ought to be left out—at what point we ought to take up the thread of our discourse—becomes of paramount importance. Obviously, it is useless to repeat what is well-known.

Many of these primitive methods, however, are still so frequently practised, that this book would be incomplete without some reference at least being made to the more important among them. Therefore, with a view to clearing the ground for what is to follow, and for the benefit of the general reader, this chapter will be devoted to the more familiar systems of 'sharping.'

There is, perhaps, no field of operation so prolific in specimens of the genus 'sharp' as a race-course and its approaches upon the occasion of a popular race-meeting. For our present purpose, therefore, we cannot do better than to imagine, for the moment, that we are on our way to some such gathering. Arriving at the London terminus, in good time for our train, we take our seats in a second-class smoking compartment. Possibly the only other occupants of the carriage at first are two or three holiday makers, on pleasure bent. Not really sporting men, but average citizens, looking forward to the excitement of the race, and also possibly to the pleasurable anxiety of a little 'flutter,' at long odds or otherwise.

It is not long before the other seats are all occupied. A man of decidedly 'sporting' appearance, with a field-

glass slung over his shoulder, and carrying a thick travelling rug, strolls leisurely by the door, merely glancing in as he passes. In a few moments, however, he returns, and takes a middle seat in the compartment. Then follow two or three others, averaging in appearance something between sporting characters and second-rate commercial travellers. These take whatever seats may happen to be vacant, and either become absorbed in their newspapers or enter into conversation with their neighbours, as the case may be. The experienced reader will have no need to be told that we are associating with a gang working the 'three-card trick.' The man in sporting attire is the 'sharp,' and those who accidentally (?) dropped in after him are his confederates.

No sooner is the train well on its way, than our friend of the field-glasses takes down his rug from the rack, folds it across his knees, and producing a pack of cards, selects three—generally a king and two others—which he throws, face upward, upon the rug.

'Now, gentlemen,' he says, 'I think we'll have a little game, just to pass the time. Anyhow, if it amuses me, it won't hurt you.' With these or some such words by way of preface, he takes up the three cards, and throws them, one at a time, face downward, upon the rug. Then, with much rapidity, he transposes the positions of the cards several times, and observes, 'Now, tell me which is the king, and stake your money.'

Having thus attracted attention, he commences again. At this point, one of the confederates looks calmly up from his paper, and murmurs something to his neighbour about 'making one's expenses.' Probably, also, he will produce a couple of sovereigns.

'Now, gentlemen,' continues the sharp, 'there are two cards for you,'—taking them up—'and one card for me. The king is mine,'—taking it up—'the ace and the seven are yours.' Then, with everyone in the carriage following his movements, he again throws the cards down and manipulates them as before. 'Now, tell me which is my card,' he says. Nobody responds, however; and the sharp picks up the king, which proves to be in the position where one would expect to find it. Indeed, the on-looker who could not follow the king through its various evolutions would be dull of perception.

Again and again the performance is repeated, and every time the on-lookers can follow the movements of the king with the utmost ease. At length, in response to an appeal from the operator 'not to be backward, gentlemen,' the confederate who produced the sovereigns a little while ago suddenly dashes one down on the card which all believe to be the king. The card is turned up, and proves to be the right one, consequently he receives the amount of his stake.

At the next turn another confederate stakes a sovereign, and wins. The same thing follows with a

third. Then, perhaps, the first stakes two sovereigns, and again wins. Not only so, but taking advantage of the obviously unsuspicious nature of the operator, he picks up the card himself, and in so doing accidentally bends one corner up slightly.

Now everyone has heard of the three-card trick, though not one in a thousand knows how it is worked. Consequently, the uninitiated among our associates, finding that they are able to trace the king unerringly, begin to think that, either this operator is a duffer, or that they are particularly sharp fellows. Besides, there is the king, going about with a turned-up corner, and losing money for the performer at every turn. Small wonder, then, that their cupidity is aroused, and at length one of them stakes a sovereign on the card with the turned-up corner. And he wins? Oh, dear no! By some unaccountable mischance, the king has become straightened in the course of manipulation, and a corner of one of the other cards has been turned up. Singular, is it not? Of course the loser cannot complain, or he would have to admit that he had been trying to take an unfair advantage of his opponent. Therefore he resolves to trust entirely to his judgment in the future.

Then, for the first time, apparently, the operator notices the defective corner and straightens it. Again the cards are thrown down, and the last player, thinking to retrieve his loss, stakes another sovereign. He has

kept his eyes intently upon the king, as it passed from side to side and back to the centre. He feels confident of success this time ; but there is a mistake somewhere, for again he loses.

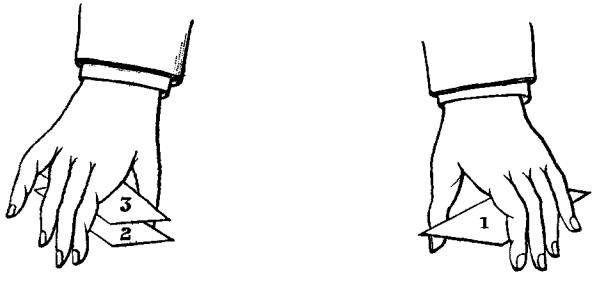
And so the game goes on, with unvarying result Whenever one of the first two or three players—the confederates—stakes his money, he always wins. Everyone else always loses. Eventually, the game is discontinued ; either owing to the fact that no more stakes are to be had, or that we are approaching our destination.

Upon leaving the train, if we are curious, we may easily discover which of our late companions are the confederates. They leave the carriage to all appearance perfect strangers to one another ; but follow one of them at a distance, and it will be found that they are fairly well-acquainted when not professionally employed.

This trick is an extremely simple one ; and is accomplished as follows.

When the cards are taken up, preparatory to manipulation, they are held as indicated in fig. 1. First, the two indifferent cards are taken, one in each hand, and next, the king in the right hand. Card No. 2 in the illustration, therefore, is the king. In throwing down the cards at the outset No. 1 card is placed in position 1 ; No. 2 card in position 2 ; and No. 3 in position 3. Thus, the king occupies a position between the two other cards. So far, all is plain sailing, and it

is by no means difficult to trace the movements of the card we are following up, however deftly it may be manipulated. There is a saying that 'the quickness of the hand deceives the eye.' That is nonsense. No hand, however expert, can produce a movement so quick that the eye cannot detect it. What really deceives the eye in sleight of hand is that some of the movements



1 2 3

FIG. 1.—Three-card Trick.

are not exactly what they appear to be, their real nature is skilfully disguised. Of this the three card trick is a good example. When the sharp observes his pigeon getting ready to be plucked, he changes his tactics slightly from the straightforward course he has hitherto pursued. The cards appear to be thrown down in the same manner as before, but it is not so. In this case,

No. 1 card is thrown down in No. 1 position, as at the outset; but, instead of throwing down No. 2—the king—in No. 2 position, it is card No. 3 which is allowed to fall, and the king goes finally into position 3. Thus the uninitiated, instead of following up the king, as they fondly believe, are really on the trail of card No. 3.

It will be readily understood that the turned-up corner can present no difficulty to a sharp who has devoted a little practice to its rectification. The act of throwing down the cards is quite sufficient to cover all the movement which is necessary.

Instead of ear-marking the card by turning up a corner, the confederate will sometimes tear off a very minute scrap from his newspaper, and, wetting it, will attach it to a corner of the card as he turns it up. When this is done, the operator of course contrives to slip the moistened fragment from one card to another.

Leaving our three-card acquaintances to their own devices—though, perhaps, our duty would be to give them into the hands of the police—we will proceed to the race-course.

Space will not permit us here to consider the numerous evil devices for acquiring the root of all evil indulged in by race-course sharps. In fact, these scarcely form part of our subject. Some of them, such as 'telling the tale,' and so on, are more or less ingenious; but at best they are merely vulgar swindles which involve no

skill beyond the exercise of that tact and plausibility which are common to sharps and swindlers of every kind.

Pursuing our investigations, then, let us suppose that we now approach one of the spots where winners and losers, sharps and flats, meet on the common ground of applying meat and drink to the refreshment of body and soul. Here, if we are favoured, we may chance to meet with a little entertainment—intellectual and instructive—provided by the spectacle of three persons who are engaged in the scientific recreation of spinning coins upon some convenient corner of table or buffet. Needless to say, they are two 'sharps' and a 'flat,' and their little game is 'odd man.'

The game is simple, but financially there is a good deal in it. It is played in this way. Three coins being spun on edge upon a table, it is obvious that either all three will fall with the same side up—in which case the spin must be repeated—or, two will fall one way and one the other. The owner of the latter coin is the 'odd man.' There are two systems of playing. Either the odd man is out—that is to say, he stands aside, whilst the other two spin for 'head' or 'woman'—or the odd man pays. In either case, the loser pays the other two. If fairly played, of course the chances are equal for all three players. But, alas! even this apparently innocent game is capable of sophistication.

The method of cheating will be seen at a glance on referring to fig. 2.

A coin which has been slightly bevelled to one side will bear a superficial examination without creating suspicion as to its genuineness. If it has a milled edge, it must necessarily be re-milled. Such a coin, when spun on edge, will always tend to fall in one direction. The bevelling, as shown in the figure, is exaggerated, for distinctness' sake; in practice, the angle is very slight.

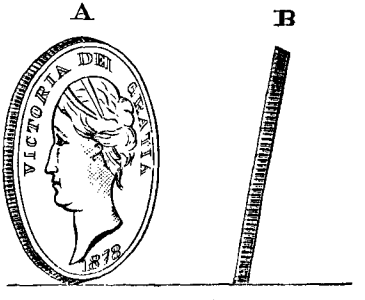


FIG. 2.—Bevelled Coins.

Two 'sportsmen,' each provided with coins of this description, meet with a 'mug' and propose spinning for liquid refreshment. If they are pretty sure of their man they may possibly allow him to win. Afterwards, however, they lead him on to spin for higher stakes, and then he invariably loses.

If the game is 'odd man pays,' they spin with coins which will fall alike; simultaneously changing their coins from time to time, so that they do not always bring them same side up. This being so, all three coins must either fall alike, or else the dupe will be the odd man. Then he pays each of his companions the amount of the stakes.

Thus, the chances are dead against the dupe, for his opponents cannot possibly lose.

When the game is 'odd man out,' the winnings are not made so rapidly ; but at the same time they are quite as certain, and the proceedings are not so liable to create suspicion. In this case, the sharps spin with coins which will fall in different directions, and consequently the dupe is never the odd man. His coin is bound to fall the same way as one of the others ; so he has to spin again with one or other of the 'rooks.' If the second spin is 'head wins,' the sharp will use a coin which falls 'head.' Here, again, the coins must either fall alike, and the spin be repeated, or the dupe must lose.

To disarm suspicion, however, the second spin may occasionally be a fair one ; his opponent using a 'square' coin. Even then, the chances are two to one against him. Supposing the stakes are a sovereign, the loser has to pay the two winners a sovereign each ; and therefore if the dupe loses he has to pay two sovereigns, whilst, if he wins, he receives only one. So much, then, for 'odd man.'

If we search the purlieus of the race-course, we are sure to find the 'purse trick' well in evidence. A good many people seem to get a living at it, yet there is not much mystery connected with it. Its accomplishment rests purely on sleight of hand. We are all familiar with the purse purporting to contain a half-crown and a shilling which the salesman offers to dispose of for the modest

amount of sixpence or so. It is extraordinary, however, how few know wherein the trick lies. For the benefit of those who are unacquainted with it, the following short description is given.

The man throws a half-crown and a shilling into a two-penny purse, and the price demanded for the whole may vary from sixpence to eighteenpence, according to circumstances. Sometimes the purse, when purchased, is found to contain the actual amount ostensibly put into it. 'Springes to catch woodcocks!' The purchaser is a confederate. In the event of a stranger buying it, the contents will prove to be a penny and a halfpenny. The operator really throws the half-crown and shilling into the purse several times; turning them out again into his hand, to show the genuineness of the transaction. Or, he may spin them in the air, and catch them in the purse by way of variety. But when the time for selling arrives, although he does not appear to have changed his tactics in the least, the transmutation of metals becomes an accomplished fact, silver is converted to bronze.

The man has a money-bag slung in front of him, into which he is continually dipping his hand, for the purpose of taking out or returning the coins. This bag seems to contain only silver, but there is a vein of baser metal underlying the nobler. Therefore, in taking out a half-crown, nothing is easier than for the man to palm a penny at the same time. This being done, it is the

penny which goes into the purse, and the half-crown is transferred, for the moment, to his palm; but only for the moment. It is dropped, immediately, into the bag; so that, by the time that his hand has fallen to his side, it is empty. That is one dodge. Another is to take the half-crown and penny together in the fingers, the penny underlying the half-crown, concealed from view. Then the penny is dropped and the half-crown palmed as before. Again, the half-crown and shilling being really in the purse, the man will take them out with his fingers, apparently for the purpose of showing them to the multitude, at the same time introducing into the purse three halfpence which he has held concealed. Then he appears to throw the silver coins quickly into the purse, but in reality he palms them, the sound made by the coins in falling being counterfeited by chinking the coppers which the purse already contains. A variation upon this trick is sometimes performed with a piece of paper in which is screwed up some article of cheap jewellery, and into which the coins are supposed to be thrown, as in the purse trick. These men adopt various methods of explaining their reasons for selling so much money at so cheap a rate, one of the most common being that someone has laid a wager that the public are too sceptical to buy money offered in that manner. Well, such a wager would be a tolerably safe one; for, as a rule, the public are only sceptical concerning those

things which are genuine. It is probably because the purse-trick is not genuine that the tricksters find purchasers. It is always the swindle which takes best with the public. Certainly, anyone who is taken in over this trick deserves to be.

On our way home in the train we may, perhaps, encounter a party playing 'Nap.' It may be a friendly game, fairly played—or it may not. If it is not, we shall undoubtedly find that one of the players loses heavily. It is only penny Nap, he is told. Yes, but one can lose a good deal, in a small way, even at penny Nap. Especially if the other players know the best and quickest way of winning.

The most ordinary way of cheating at this game consists of 'putting up' hands for the dupe and one of the other players. The methods of accomplishing this manœuvre will be fully detailed in the chapter on 'Manipulation.' For the present, it is sufficient to say that the cards are so manipulated that the dupe has always a good hand. So far, this looks as though matters should prove very favourable to the dupe; therefore, he frequently goes 'Nap.' It always happens, however, that one of the other players holds a hand which is slightly better. The dupe may even hold the ace, king, queen, and knave of one suit, and the ace of another. By every law of the game he is bound to go 'Nap,' and win. So he makes his long suit trumps, feeling that he

has a 'certainty.' But when the cards are played, it turns out that one of his opponents holds five small trumps against his four big ones, and he loses on the last round.

An incident of this kind is reported, where the dupe, in a two-handed game, being rendered suspicious by the eagerness of those about him to wager that he would not make his Nap, instead of leading out his long suit, made his odd ace the trump, and thereby won. In a game of more than two players, this could be prevented by one of the others holding two cards of the same suit as the ace. Moral—Don't gamble with strangers. It is never safe; particularly in a railway train.

The foregoing being sufficient to give the reader a general idea of the common sharp and his methods, no more need be said with regard to this elementary branch of our subject. It will be sufficient to point out that the sharp usually devotes his entire energies to perfecting himself in some particular game. Having found his victim, he feigns indifferent play, and encourages the dupe to 'take him on.' No matter how skilful he may be, he never allows any evidence of the fact to escape him. One does not find a card-sharper, for instance, entertaining his chance acquaintances with card-tricks—at least, not to their knowledge. To use the language which he would probably adopt, such a proceeding would be 'giving himself away with a pound of tea.'

The sharp's motto is, 'Art is to conceal art;' and his success in life depends very greatly upon the strict observation of this maxim.

Skill, however, is not the only qualification necessary to the successful sharp. He must have unbounded self-confidence if his wiles are to be of any avail. In addition, he must also possess tact and address, for upon these two qualities will depend the grade of society into which he will be enabled to carry his operations. Given a liberal endowment of these two attributes, there is no circle, however high or however select, into which the sharp will not ultimately penetrate. The public have occasionally an opportunity of peeping behind the scenes, but the cases of cheating which come to light bear a very small proportion to those which are condoned or hushed up, and the number of these again is nothing when compared with the infinity of cases which are never discovered.

All the comparatively insignificant matters dealt with so far are of course common knowledge to many. As before mentioned, however, the general public know very little of them, otherwise the numbers who gain a living by such means could not exist. It is for this reason only that they have been even referred to here. Other and far more ingenious trickeries call for our attention, and to these we will now pass on.

CHAPTER III

MARKED CARDS AND THE MANNER OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT

PROBABLY it was at no very recent date in the history of card-playing that some genius first recognised the advantage which would accrue to a player who could devise some means of placing a distinctive mark on the back of each card, imperceptible to all but himself, to indicate its suit and value. Every card-player must at some time or other have exclaimed mentally, 'Oh, if I only knew what cards my opponents hold!' There one has, then, the origin of marked cards. The sharp, above all others, desires to know his opponent's cards. It is almost a necessity of his existence; and in his case it is certainly true that 'necessity is the mother of invention,' and 'knows no law.' Whatever the sharp may find necessary he is sure to acquire, and will not be scrupulous as to the manner of its acquisition.

The systems of card-marking are as numerous as they are ingenious. They vary from a mark which covers the greater portion of the back of the card to a mark which

is invisible. This latter may not appear to be of much utility, but it must be borne in mind the sharp is not restricted to the use of the sense of sight only. Sometimes, indeed, it is necessary for him to know the cards without looking at them, and then a visible mark would be of no possible use to him.

So numerous, indeed, are the systems of marking—almost every card-sharper, worthy of the name, having a system peculiar to himself—that it is impossible to give a tenth part of them. To attempt to do so would be to weary the reader, and, further, it is unnecessary. All these various systems are capable of general classification, and a few leading instances will suffice to give the key to the whole. For brevity and convenience, then, we will consider the subject under the following heads :—

A—General principles of marking.

B—The marking of unprinted backs.

C—Marking by dot and puncture.

D—Cards marked in manufacture.

E—Shading and tint-marking.

F—Line and scroll work.

G—Cards marked whilst in play.

§ A—*General principles of marking.*—Whatever method of marking may be adopted in the preparation of 'faked' cards or 'readers,' however recondite that method may be, it is referable to one or other of two general principles. That is to say, either the cards have

each a distinctive mark placed in some convenient position, or the mark is similar in every case, the indication being given by the position which it occupies. Some systems are based upon a combination of the two principles ; but all are developments of either one or the other. When the mark, whatever it may be, is placed at one end of the card, it is of course necessary to mark both ends

The chief desideratum in marking, of course, is to produce work which is easily decipherable to the trained eye of the expert, but which nevertheless is invisible to others. How well this has been accomplished will be seen from the examples which follow. Many of the specimens given herein have been submitted to experts who have been allowed to retain them as long as they pleased, and have been returned with the statement that to all appearance the cards have not been tampered with, no mark being discoverable. This being the case, what chance has a player of detecting the falsification, in the very cursory examination which is possible during play ? As the reader will perceive, there is no difficulty in marking cards in such a manner as will arouse no suspicion. Anyone could invent a system which no one but himself could decipher, and which would defy detection. The only difficulty is to read the marks with speed and accuracy. In many games it is only necessary to know which are high cards

and which are low; then the matter is considerably simplified. In some games it is not even necessary to know the suit of the cards, and thus the case is simplified still further. It is rarely, indeed, that the sharp requires to know all the cards. Generally speaking, if all the picture-cards and the aces are marked, that will give him all the advantage he needs. The rest may be left to chance and good play. In fact, the sharp uses trickery as little as possible; he never overdoes the thing. Whilst he is winning, he is, as a rule, content to win fairly, for the most part. His subtle methods are reserved—or should be, if he knows his business—for occasions when chance is against him. The fewer are the cards which are marked, the less the chance of detection, and the less the marks are resorted to the better. Obviously, the man who has it in his power to stock his hand with high cards at will, need never be in a hurry to win. The game is in his hands. The sharp who uses marked cards will always contrive to 'work in' those he has prepared when possible, but failing this, he is generally in a position to mark all the cards he wishes to know during the course of the game, as we shall see further on.

§ B—*The marking of unprinted backs.*—It might very naturally be supposed, that the application of any system of marking to the backs of those cards which are of an even tint, without pattern, would be a very difficult

operation. Such, however, is by no means the case. One might think that any mark, however slight, placed upon the plain white back of a 'club-card,' must inevitably be discovered sooner or later. Such an idea, nevertheless, would indicate a very scant acquaintance with the resources which are available to the card-sharper.

One of the earliest methods of marking of which there is any record was used in connection with this class of card. The incident is related by Houdin, whose account of the matter is to the following effect.

A card-sharper having been detected in cheating, a great quantity of cards were found in his possession. The authorities, thinking that there might possibly be some preparation or falsification of them, sent them to Houdin for examination. To all appearance, however, the cards were perfectly genuine. He could detect nothing amiss with them. But notwithstanding the negative result of his investigation, he felt morally certain that they must have been tampered with in some way. He therefore persevered in his efforts to solve the problem, but several weeks elapsed, and still he found himself exactly in the position from which he started. At length, disgusted by such prolonged and repeated failure, he flung a pack of the cards carelessly across the table at which he was sitting. Then, in an instant, the long-sought revelation was presented to his

view. The cards were marked, and in a manner sufficiently ingenious to arouse the investigator's enthusiasm at the time, although the method employed might not be thought so very high class nowadays. We have advanced since then.

The cards in question were of the ordinary glazed kind, and lying at some little distance upon the table the light from the window was reflected from their backs. This circumstance disclosed the fact that each one had a small unglazed spot upon it, placed in such a position as to indicate the suit and value. Fig. 4 will explain the system at a glance.

The glaze is removed by the simple expedient of putting a drop of water upon the required spot, and blotting it off after a few seconds. Such a mark is quite invisible under ordinary circumstances, but when the cards are held at a suitable angle to the light, the unglazed spot is readily apparent.

This, of course, is not the only method of producing the desired effect. Sometimes the glaze is removed by means of a sharp knife.

Another plan is to produce a shallow concavity at the proper position by laying the card upon its face and pressing upon it with the rounded end of a penholder or some similar and convenient instrument. In fact, anything which will cause a little variation in the reflection of the light from the back of the card will suffice.

The cards above referred to were merely 'picquet' packs. Therefore there was nothing lower than the 'seven.' If it is necessary to mark a full pack, the lower cards may be marked with two dots, as shown in fig. 4.

When unglazed, or 'steam-boat' cards were in general use, a very efficient mode of marking was devised. It was done by ruling lines on the backs with a piece of paraffin wax. Fig. 3 shows the arrangement.

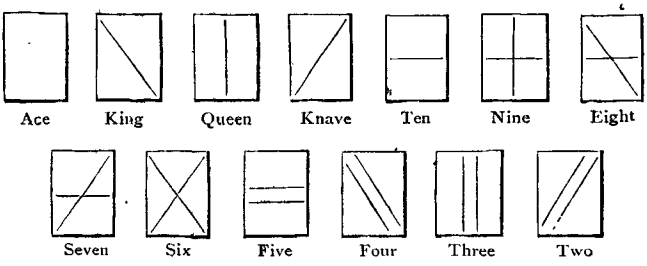


FIG. 3.— Unglazed Cards.

This method is of course the converse of the foregoing, the object of using the wax being to impart a glaze where none previously existed. As before, these marks are only decipherable when the cards are held at a proper angle.

Cards marked as in fig. 3 would answer perfectly for a game such as 'poker,' where the suit is of no consequence. If it is required to give both suit and value, another mark—a dot for example—could be added, the position of which would give the necessary indica-

tion. The ace, it will be observed, is not marked. In most systems, either the ace or the two is indicated by the absence of marking. The same thing applies to the suits, it is only required to mark three out of the four.

§ C—*Marking by dot and puncture.*—The main out-

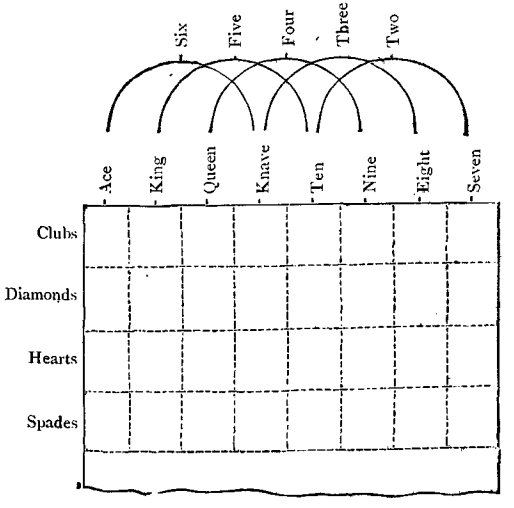


FIG. 4.—Divisions indicating suit and value.

lines of this method will be understood from what has already been said. If the unglazed spots are represented by minute dots, the principle is practically the same. The only difference is in connection with marking by puncture. In this case the mark is made by pricking

the card with a very fine needle upon its face. This raises a minute point or 'burr' upon the back, which can be detected by passing the thumb across the back of the card whilst dealing.

If a plate of metal the size of a playing-card is divided at each end into parallelograms, after the manner shown in fig. 4, these divisions will represent the positions occupied by the puncture or dot in representing the various suits and values. A small hole being drilled in the centre of each parallelogram, the plate will serve for a 'template' by means of which the cards may be pierced in the correct places. The plate is laid upon the face of the card, and a fine needle is pricked through the proper hole, just far enough to raise the necessary projection on the back of the card. One point at each end, then, will serve to mark all the cards of a picquet pack. If those cards which are lower than seven have to be marked, two points may be taken. For instance, a point in the top left-hand corner, together with one three divisions further to the right, will indicate the six of clubs. A point in the second space on the same line, with one in the fifth space, will represent the five of clubs, and so on. This is a very good system of marking for many purposes. It takes only a short time to mark the whole pack; the marks are invisible, and will escape the closest scrutiny. But great practice is necessary to render the touch sufficiently acute, and the perception of the

small differences sufficiently delicate, to read the marks with precision.

Another method whereby a single dot is made to represent both suit and value of any card is illustrated in fig. 5. In every ornamental back almost, there is

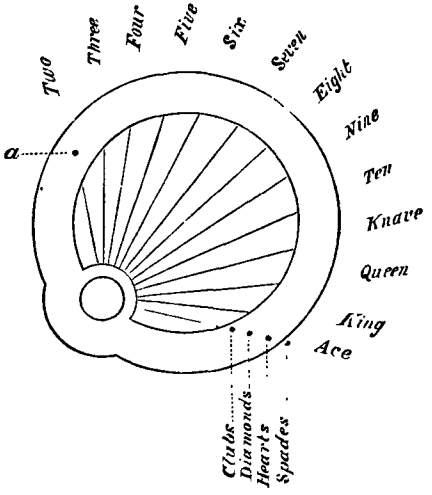


FIG. 5.

some portion of the pattern which is more or less of a fan-shaped or radial design. If this should happen to contain thirteen divisions, nothing is easier than to assign to each one a value, and thus the entire suit is represented by merely varying the position of the dot. The suit is given by placing the dot nearer or farther

from the centre. Fig. 5 is a diagram which illustrates this method in its simplest form. A dot placed outside the periphery of the design stands for 'spades,' one just inside for 'hearts,' half-way between the two lines for diamonds,' and close to the inner circle it means 'clubs.' The value or 'size,' as it is called, is shown by the radial line, opposite which the mark is placed. Having followed this explanation, the reader will at once perceive that the dot marked *a* (fig. 5) represents the two of diamonds.

Of course it frequently happens that there is no part of the pattern which contains thirteen divisions. Then, either more than one design must be used, or the form of the mark must be varied. Supposing there are only six divisions available for the purpose, the six highest cards can be indicated by a dot, the six next in order by a small dash, and the last by a minute cross.

§ D—*Cards mark'd in manufacture.*—Given the original conception of marked cards, and their practical application to the needs of the sharper, the next step is, obviously, the production of such wares commercially. The desirability of being able to open a new pack of cards and find them ready prepared for use, was too palpable to be overlooked.

For a long time the existence of such cards was kept profoundly secret among a very few sharpers, and those 'in the know' reaped a rich harvest. Nowadays,

however, these things are, comparatively speaking, 'common objects of the sea-shore.'

Fig. 6 is a reproduction of the first pattern ever supplied, ready marked, by the makers.

The distinctive marking was arranged by causing the end of the scroll, marked '*a*,' to assume various forms, and point in different directions.

This card did very well for a time; but the mark was very obtrusive and the pattern became obsolete, being discarded, in fact, for improved forms which were of later invention.

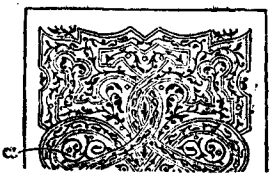


FIG. 6.

The next step in the way of improvement came with the introduction of the plaid-back cards, at one time largely used. It was soon discovered that these lent themselves readily to the purposes of falsification, and the result was the invention of a mark both easy to read and not liable to detection. Like so many other good things, it is marvellous in its simplicity. It is based partly upon modification of the pattern, and partly upon the position occupied by the mark. Fig. 7 illustrates a complete suit of these cards.

The higher cards commence with a set of five parallel lines, placed somewhat to the left of the top right-hand corner. The space between the first and

second lines is increased to indicate an ace; between the second and third, a king; between the third and fourth, a queen; and between the fourth and fifth, a knave. For the ten, nine, eight, and seven, the pattern is so arranged that the indicating lines terminate at the corner of the card. These being similarly treated, correspond with the four cards of that group. The six, five, four, and three, are respectively given by a similar band, which is so placed that it terminates upon the right hand side of the card, immediately below the top corner. The two is known by the fact of the card being unmarked; that is to say, the lines of all the bands are an equal distance apart, and are not tampered with in any way.

The suit is given by a band of lines, terminating some little distance below the top left-hand corner, on the left of the card. The first space (counting from the top) being widened, signifies a diamond; the second, a heart; the third, a club; and the fourth, a spade. If the reader has made the progress in 'sharping' which might reasonably be expected at this stage of his instruction, he should have no difficulty in distinguishing the suit of the ace in fig. 7. It is evidently the ace of clubs.

This pattern is of especial value to the man who can deal 'seconds,' [1] as in giving off the 'draft' at

[1] *Vide* Chapter VI., 'Manipulation.'

poker, and so on, by keeping the pack spread out a little, he can read off the values of the first four or five cards. That is the great advantage in having marks which come quite close to the edge.

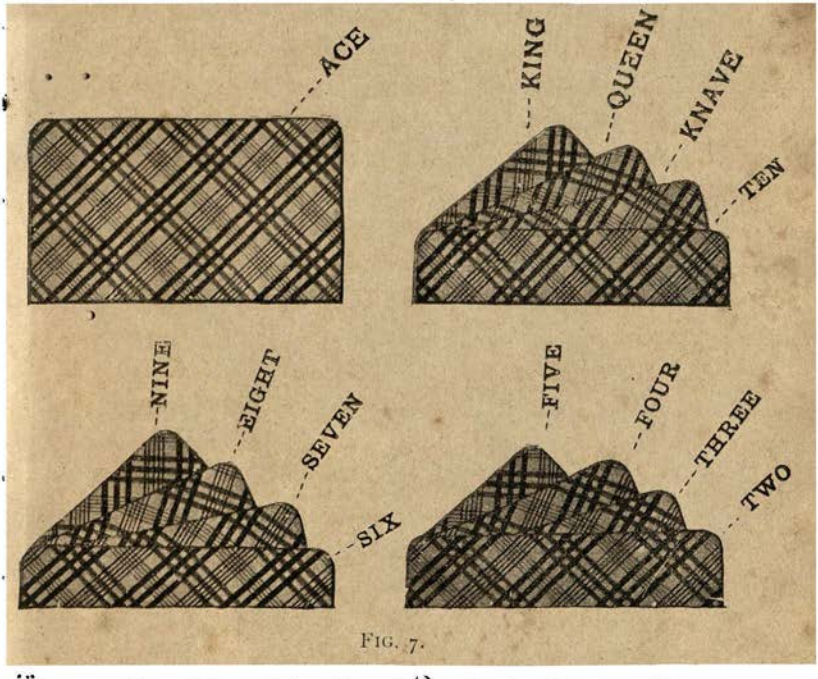


FIG. 7.

We will conclude this subject of printed backs with a description of one of the best designs ever made (fig. 8). This pattern is particularly easy to read, even at a considerable distance, yet it is certainly not liable to

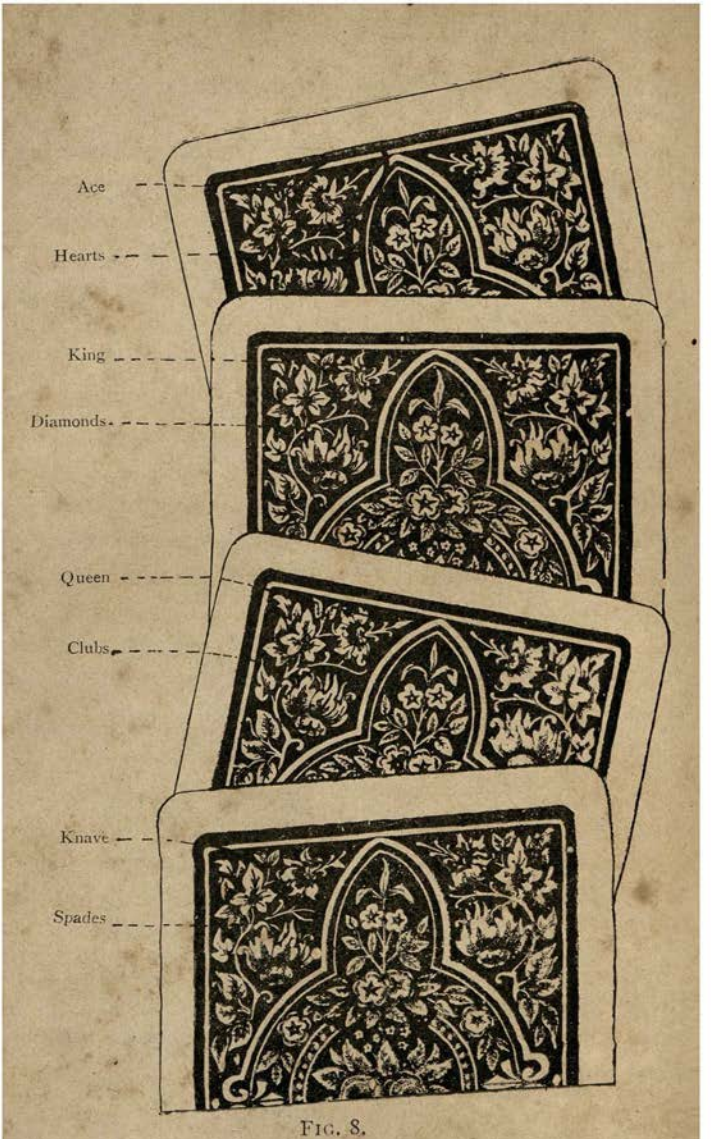


FIG. 8.

detection by the uninitiated. To anyone who knows the secret, it appears strange that a pack of these cards may be given to a novice for examination, with the information that they are marked, and he will never find anything wrong with them. He may even examine them with a microscope, yet he will see nothing amiss. The reason is that he does not know what to look for. Most probably he will expect to find dots or marks, *put on* the card by hand. He might thus detect 'scroll work,' examples of which are given further on, though most likely 'shading' would escape his notice from the fact that it is something for which he is not prepared.

In this instance the distinguishing marks are two in number, one for suit and one for value. These are respectively indicated by variations in the form of the two small sprays in the left hand corner, round which lines have been drawn in the upper card (fig. 8).

The lower of the two sprays is caused to show the suit by being curved up or down, or having its termination formed into a suggestion of a spade or a heart, as will be seen on reference to the figure.

The upper spray is variously altered to denote the values. Thus :

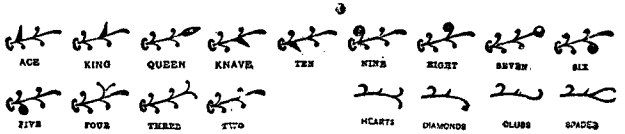


FIG. 9.

Cards marked in printing have of late years been virtually abandoned in America, owing to the fact that they are readily detected, even by those who are utterly unable to discover the marks. The general appearance of the cards is sufficient to show their origin. In the first place, the ink with which the cards are printed is as a rule very inferior; and secondly, the 'ace of spades' has NOT the maker's name upon it. As the maker himself would say—'What do *you* think?'

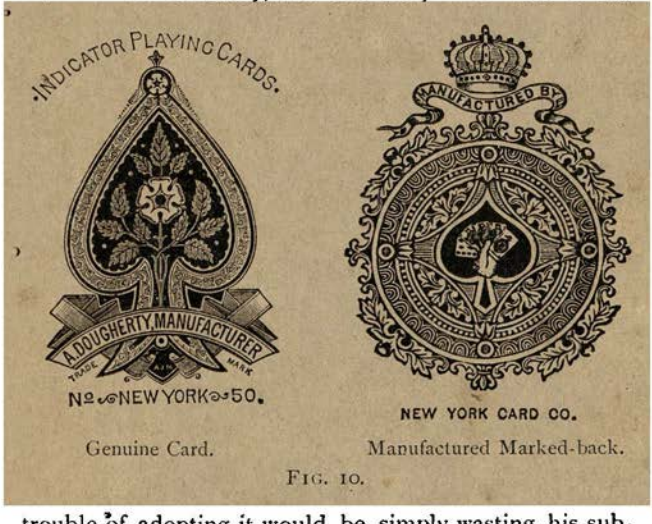
Fig. 10 is a comparison of the ace of spades from a genuine pack with that from a pack of manufactured 'marked backs.' It will be seen that the marked card bears the title of a purely hypothetical 'Card Company.'

By referring to the price-lists given towards the end of this book, one finds that the price at which they are quoted is by no means exorbitant, when one bears in mind the risk which the maker runs, and the fact that he has to go to the expense of fifty-two plates for printing the backs, as against the one only which is required for genuine cards. In revenge, and to keep down the cost of production, he uses ink of a very inferior quality to that employed by good firms. Thus, the cards are rendered open to suspicion from the first, and no doubt this has much to do with their falling into disuse.

In America their employment is confined chiefly to mining camps, where one may still find 'saloons' which

are stocked entirely with this kind of 'paper,' as the cards are called.

England, however, must be a fine field for them, as card players here are really so ignorant that the subtle methods of cheating would be thrown away. The best work is not necessary, and the sharp who went to the



Genuine Card. Manufactured Marked-back.

FIG. 10.

trouble of adopting it would be simply wasting his substance on the desert air. There is little doubt that these cards are largely used over here.

§ E—*Shading and tint-marking.*—Manufactured cards having fallen into comparative desuetude, the reasonable inference is that they have been supplanted by something better; and such is the fact. In the hands of the best

men they have been superseded by genuine cards, marked (generally by the sharp himself) either with 'shading' or 'line-work.'

The earliest method of shading, so far as can be ascertained, consisted of the application to plain-backed cards of an even tint which, being rendered more or less deep, denoted the values of certain cards. This tint was produced by rubbing the card with a rag, lightly impregnated with plumbago, until the required depth of tint was obtained. This imperfect method, however, has gradually developed into others which can hardly be said to leave anything to be desired—at least from the sharp's point of view.

At the present time shading is principally confined, if not entirely so, to ornamental backs. It is effected by applying a faint wash of colour to a fairly large portion of the card. This colour of course must be one which approximates to the tint of the card, and further, it must be one which will dry without removing the glaze.

Just as there has been continual warfare between the makers of heavy guns and the inventors of armour-plating, so there has been a long struggle between the playing-card manufacturer and the professional gambler. Whilst the latter has been engaged in the endeavour to concoct a stain with which he could shade his cards without spoiling the enamel or altering the colour, the former has done his best to circumvent the sharp's

endeavours by compounding the glaze of ingredients which will spoil the 'little game.' For some time the manufacturer triumphed, and it became known that Hart's red 'Angel-backs' were unstainable. Alas! however, vice—and, shall we say science—was victorious, and one can now buy a fluid warranted to stain any card for a mere trifle.

These fluids are nothing more than solutions in spirit of various aniline dyes. For red, aurosine is used, and for blue aniline blue. Stafford's red ink, diluted with spirit, produces a perfect stain for red cards. Others as good can be made with the 'Diamond' dyes.

A suitable solution having been obtained, the cards are shaded, either by putting a wash over a certain spot or by washing over the whole of the back with the exception of one spot. The latter method is the better of the two in many respects, as the cards can be distinguished at a distance of two or three yards, and yet will bear the strictest examination, even at the hands of one who understands the former method. In fact, the closer one looks at the cards the less likely one is to discover the mark, or, as the sharp would say, to 'tumble' to the 'fake.'

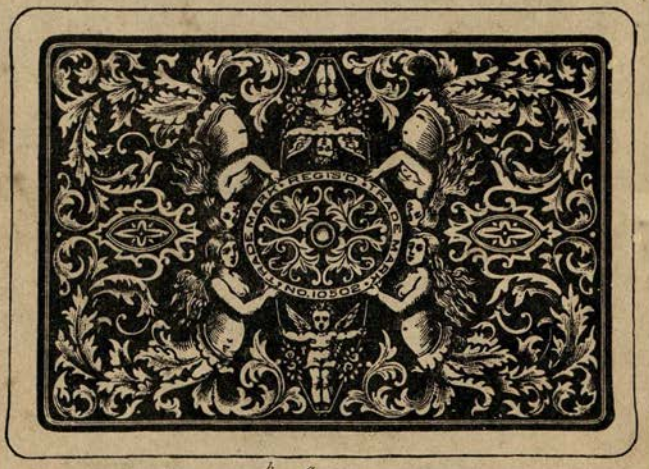
The directions for use issued with the shading fluids will be found on page 302.

As the delicate tints of shaded work are lost in reproduction, satisfactory examples cannot be given.

On the opposite page, however, will be found an illustration of one method of shading the familiar 'angel-back' card represented in fig. 11.

The shading in fig. 12 has been considerably exaggerated, to render it apparent.

The little 'angel' (*a*, fig. 11) is made to indicate the



b *a*

FIG. 11.—Angel-back.

value of the cards by shading the head for an ace; the right wing for a king; the left wing for a queen; the right arm for a knave, and so on. The two is not marked.

The suit of the card is denoted by shading various portions of the foliated design adjacent to the 'angel' (*b*, fig. 11).

FIG. 12.—'FALLEN ANGELS

With the exception of the exaggerated shading, these marks are facsimiles of those upon a pack purchased from one of the dealers, all of whom supply them. Although the cards can be bought ready shaded, most sharpers prefer to do them for themselves. Therefore, they merely buy the marking-fluids, and invent their own marks.

§ F—*Line and scroll work.*—This is the kind of marking which is adopted by the most expert among card-sharpers. When well done it can hardly be detected even by another sharper.

This system may be briefly summarised as follows. Some convenient portion of the card-back is selected—a flower or some similar device in the pattern, for instance—and a shading consisting of very fine lines, in imitation of the normal shading of the pattern, is used, its position indicating the value of the card. A specially prepared 'line-work fluid' is used, and the work is put on with a fine pen or, better still, with a fine sable pencil. In using a pen there is always a danger of scratching the enamel, but by the use of a 'photographic sable,' such as retouchers employ, this is obviated.

In order to imbue the reader with a due appreciation of these works of art, our first example shall be one of a very obvious character; one that could only be used in a 'soft game.'[1] We shall then have an opportunity of

[1] This expression does not apply, as might be imagined, to the

comparing it with one or two of the masterpieces of the century, and, looking back upon the earlier pages of this book, we can reflect upon the manner in which the

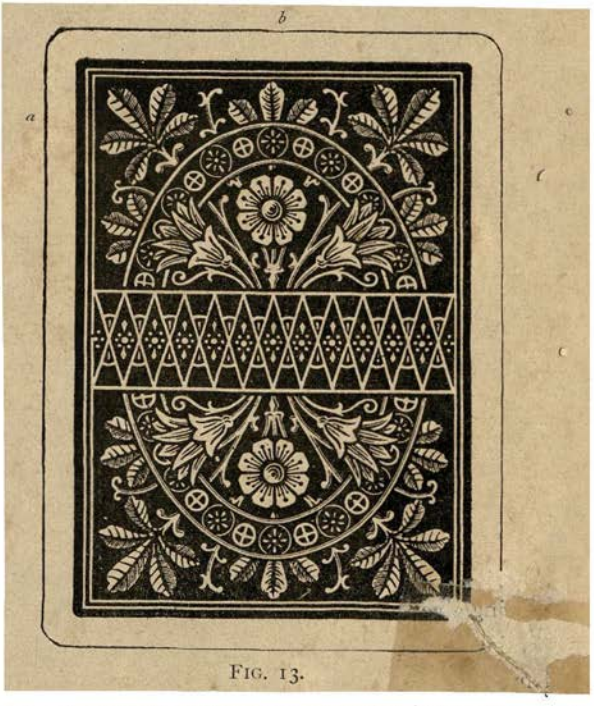


FIG. 13.

science of card-sharping is progressing, like other and more legitimate sciences.

A portion of the pattern, consisting of five projec-

comparative simplicity of the game, but rather to the positive simplicity of the players,

tions, is usually chosen in line-marking, and the line-work is applied in the following manner. The first projection, or petal, on the left, is shaded to denote an ace ; the second a king ; the third a queen ; the fourth a knave ; and the fifth a ten. Then for a nine, the first and second are shaded ; for an eight the second and third ; and so on to the six. Lastly, taking the foliations in groups of three, the first three represent the five ; the second, third, and fourth, the four ; and the third, fourth, and fifth, the three. The two is not shaded.

In the case of the card which is reproduced in fig. 13, the spray of leaves marked *a* would be chosen to indicate the values. The spray *b* would be shaded to denote the suit. Reference to fig. 14 will serve to make this clear.

Having mastered this elementary method, we will now turn to some of the finest work that has ever been put upon cards. Fig. 15 illustrates five cards of the 'angel-back' pattern. These are respectively the king, queen, knave, ten, and nine. It is not too much to say that the mark would never be discovered without assistance be[illegible]en, by one previously acquainted with it. In this example the spray marked *c* (fig. 11) is chosen, and marked in a manner of which fig. 16 is a magnified diagram.

As a concluding example of line-work, if the reader will turn back to fig. 8, he will find, in each corner of the pattern upon the card, a leaf with five points, an ivy leaf

ACE
KING
QUEEN
KNAVE
TEN
NINE
EIGHT
SEVEN
SIX
FIVE
FOUR
THREE
TWO
CLUBS
DIAMONDS
HEARTS
SPADES

FIG. 14.

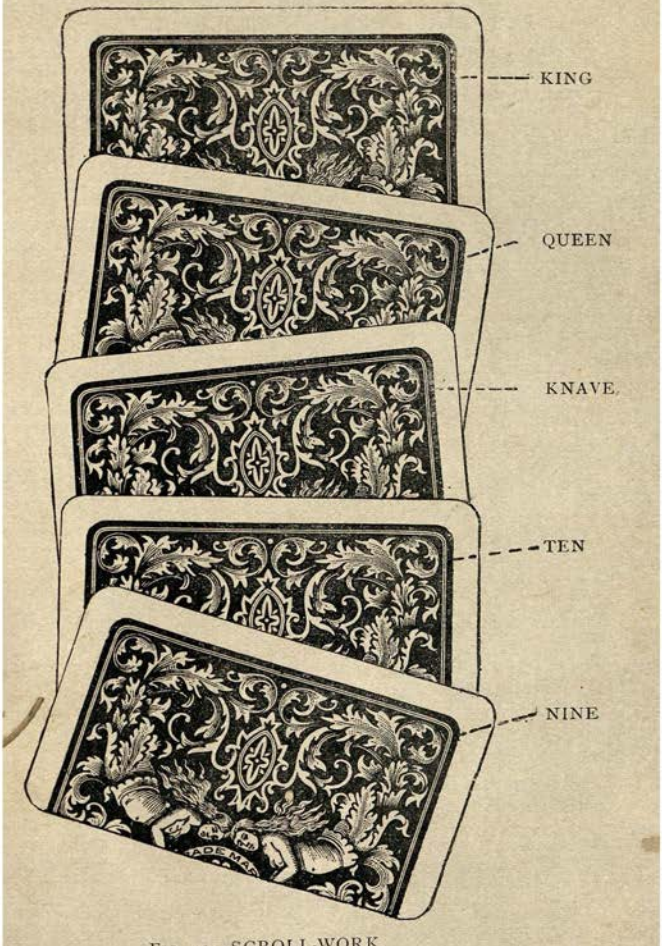


FIG. 15.—SCROLL-WORK

in fact. In marking a genuine card of this pattern, this leaf would be selected for the purpose, and shaded with line-work after the manner of fig. 17.

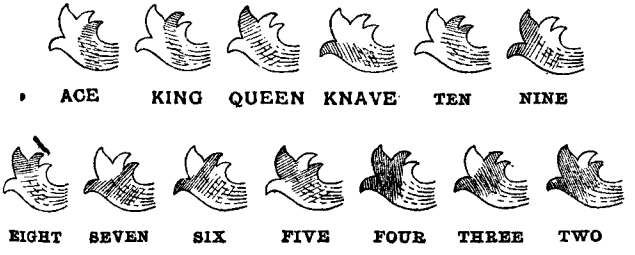


FIG. 16.

Cards marked whilst in play.—We now arrive at the last subdivision of this branch of our subject, and perhaps the one which will prove most generally interest-

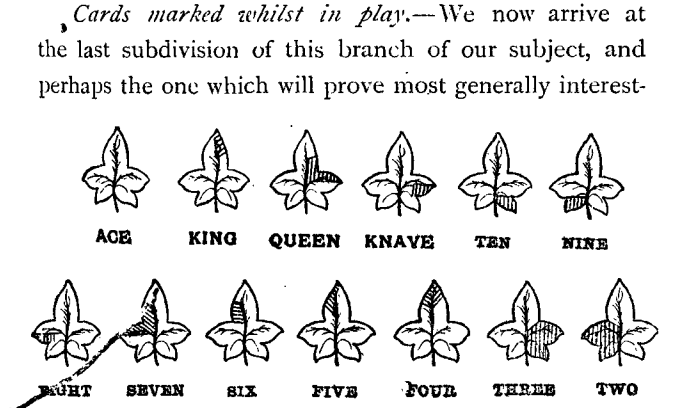


FIG. 17.

ing, viz. the possibility of placing distinctive marks upon the cards during the course of the game. The

average reader may probably be surprised to learn that such a practice has been resorted to by sharpers from time immemorial. Further, its accomplishment presents not the slightest difficulty, in fact it is the simplest thing in the world.

The earliest method appears to have been that of raising a slight burr upon the edges of the cards with an instrument provided—perhaps for that purpose (?)—by Nature, to wit, the thumb-nail. This and other primitive methods alike have been superseded by others more scientific. Therefore we will not waste our time in detailing such elementary matters, but pass on to the means used at the present day.

One of the simplest appliances is the 'nail prick,' quoted in the price-lists at half a dollar. This is simply a tiny piece of metal, carrying a point, which is held when in use under the thumb-nail of the right hand. With this point the cards can be pricked without observation, in positions which will indicate the suit and value. It is, however, not much used.

Pricking the cards is a method chiefly employed by men who can deal 'seconds.' The sharp will prick the corners of all the aces and court cards, or as many of them as happen to fall into his hands, from time to time; and whilst dealing, he can feel the little projection caused by the prick, and hold these cards back till they could be dealt to himself. One who did this every time it came

to his turn to deal must inevitably win all the money sooner or later. No sharp, however, would be insane enough to arouse suspicion in this manner.

The most refined and scientific method of pricking the cards is by means of an ingenious little appliance, known as the 'poker-ring.' This is an ordinary finger-ring, having attached to it upon the under side a needle-point of about one sixty-fourth of an inch in length (fig. 18). In the illustration, the length of the point is exaggerated.

FIG. 18.

As the cards are held in the hand, the corner of any one which it is desired to mark is simply pressed against the point with the thumb of either hand. Thus with one hand the sharp is enabled to mark any card he chooses, under the very eyes of his adversaries, and without a single suspicious movement being observable.

But the greatest advance in this direction was made when the art of marking cards with shade-work was discovered. It was found that a little aniline colour, taken upon the tip of the finger, could be transferred to the back of a card slightly deepening the tint in the spot to which it was applied. The colour was at first derived from a piece of blue aniline pencil, carried in the pocket, and upon the point of which the finger was secretly rubbed. As far as one can ascertain, the English sharp

has not progressed beyond this point in his professional knowledge. In America, however, it is otherwise. Across the water, superior intelligences soon concocted a coloured paste which would answer the purpose much better. Scooping a hole in a piece of cork, the cavity was filled with the composition, and the cork was sewn inside the lower edge of the waistcoat. In this position the colour was convenient to the hand.

The idea thus conceived has been improved upon until one may say that this method has reached perfection in the form of appliances known as 'shading boxes.'

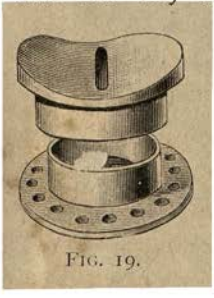


FIG. 19.

These implements of chicanery, of which fig. 19 is an illustration, are little nickel-plated boxes, which are completely filled with the coloured composition. In the centre of the lid is a slot through which the colour is pressed. The finger being passed over this slot, takes up a little of the colour. The base of the box is pierced around the circumference with small holes, for convenience in sewing it to the inside of the waistcoat or underneath the flap of a side pocket, as may be preferred. The boxes are generally used in pairs, one containing red composition and the other blue. With these two colours, almost every coloured card can be marked. The paste for refilling the boxes is supplied separately, or, if

the sharp is acquainted with its composition, he may make it for himself. Here is the recipe.

Olive oil, stearine, and camphor are incorporated in a melted condition with aniline of the required hue. The mixture is then poured out upon a level surface and allowed to cool. When cold it is worked up with the blade of a knife upon a sheet of white paper, to get rid of the superfluous oil. It is then ready for use.

Marking placed upon cards in this way can be instantly removed by merely rubbing the card upon the table-cloth.

It is worthy of note that these boxes are considered to be so good that they are not included in the catalogues of dealers in so-called 'sporting-goods.' They are kept as a secret among those who are 'in the know.'

These convenient little articles, then, bring us to the end of the systems of marking. It only remains to instruct the neophyte who has followed the course of our lessons so far, in the methods of utilising the marks when once they are placed upon the cards.

Those familiar words of the great artist who said that the medium he employed in mixing his colours was 'brains,' may find an echo in the directions for playing marked cards. They must be used with intelligence or not at all. Indeed, great circumspection is requisite in utilising the information which the marks provide. In a game of whist, for instance, a thorough-paced player

would at once detect any glaring peculiarity of play resulting from knowledge surreptitiously acquired. One may know, perfectly well, which card in one's hand would win the trick, but it is not always advisable to play it. Tact and judgment, added to a thorough acquaintance with the rules of the game which is being played, are necessary adjuncts to the successful employment of any system of cheating.

In a round game, when it is your turn to deal, you may read the cards as you deal them ; and in this way know the hands of your opponents, or at any rate the principal cards. In a single-handed game you can remember the whole of your antagonist's cards, but with more than two players it is not advisable to attempt to commit to memory more than one hand. That, preferably, should be the hand of the 'flattest man,' the 'greatest mug,' the man who is playing highest, or your most dangerous opponent. With a little practice the top card of the pack can be read, just before it is dealt. There is plenty of time for this whilst the previous card is on its way to the table. In a game such as Poker, where the suit is of no consequence, you simply repeat to yourself the value of the card as you deal it, and from your knowledge of the game you may deduce the discards from that particular hand. Then, in giving off the 'draft'—*i.e.* the cards to replace those which have been discarded, and which, of course, you have not seen—

you read the cards as they are given out. In this way you can form a tolerably accurate opinion as to what cards that hand finally contains. If your hand happens to be better, you can bet against this particular player, continually raising the stakes until all the other players are 'raised out.' That is to say, they do not feel inclined to risk so much money on their hands, and therefore they throw them down, and leave the game, for the moment, in the hands of the two highest players.

A knowledge of the top card may be utilised in dealing 'seconds.' The top card, being one which you require, may be kept back until it comes to your turn either on the deal or the draft. This, however, is a very bad way of using marked cards. It is sure to be detected sooner or later, and then your only course will be to 'clear out' from the scene of your former victories. Whilst, if you confine your attention to the use of the information given by the marks, trusting to your wits rather than to the deftness of your fingers, you will not only win but 'last.'

Working with shaded cards, in which the shading occupies the greater portion of the card, many of your opponents' cards can be read as they hold them in their hands; especially where they are held spread out, as is so often the case in England.

Whatever may be the game, marked cards will often enable you to win where you otherwise would lose, so

long as due care and judgment are exercised. For example, at Vingt-et-un, you will always know whether it is advisable to draw another card or not. You will not stand in doubt as to the card you will get. At Baccarat you will know what cards you have given the players, and what you will draw if you take one. Too many false drafts, however, are liable to create suspicion; so in this game you must be careful in your proceedings. At Loo, you will have a strong advantage, as you will always know the contents of the hand upon the table, and when to take 'miss.' In games such as 'Banker' or 'Polish Bank,' which consist of betting that you have in your hand a card (not seen) which will beat one that has been turned up, you have to contend with no uncertainty whatever.

Having pursued our subject to this point, it cannot be denied that we have learnt something of great importance, viz. that among the advantages enjoyed by us in this nineteenth century, we must not overlook those embodied in the fact, that not only are marked cards articles of commerce, readily obtainable at the right places, but we have also the means of falsifying genuine cards, of any pattern, at a few minutes' notice. Even failing this, we have at our command means of marking all the cards which it is necessary to know whilst under the very noses of our antagonists.

The practical philosopher—if such exist—whilst

meditating upon the benefits accruing to mankind from civilisation, should by no means forget that, in one notable instance at least—card-playing to wit—civilisation has provided the means of eliminating from the affairs of life the undesirable and inconvenient element of chance. There is no such thing as chance, says the predestinationist; and certainly in some cases the truth is with him.

CHAPTER IV

REFLECTORS

ALTHOUGH there can be no question as to the utility of marked cards in the hands of the sharper, it frequently happens that he is unable to avail himself of the advantages presented by their employment. It may be, perhaps, that he is so situated as to be compelled to use genuine cards belonging to someone else; and that the comparatively scanty and hurried marking supplied by means of poker-ring or shading box will not provide him with all the information imperatively demanded by the nature of the game in which he is engaged. He may, perhaps, be playing in circles where the devices of marking, and the methods of accomplishing it, are well known. For many reasons the use of marked cards may be too risky to be ventured upon; or the cards themselves may not be available at the moment. Again, the sharp may not have taken the trouble to master any system of marking; yet, for all that, he requires a knowledge of his opponent's cards just as much as his more talented brother of the pen, the brush, and the needle-point.

How then, it may be asked, is he to obtain this knowledge? Simply—very simply. The sharp needs to be hard pressed indeed, to be driven to the end of his tether.

Marked cards being out of the question, it is possible to obviate to a great extent the necessity for them by the use of certain little instruments of precision denominated 'reflectors,' or, more familiarly, 'shiners.' These are not intended to be used for the purpose of casting reflections upon the assembled company. Far from it. Their reflections are exclusively such as have no weight with the majority. They, and their use alike, reflect only upon the sharp himself.

These useful little articles are constructed in many forms, and are as perfectly adapted to the requirements of the individual as are the works of Nature herself. Just as man has been evolved in the course of ages from some primitive speck of structureless protoplasm, so, in like manner, we find that these convexities of silvered glass have crystallised out from some primordial drop of innocent liquid, more or less accidentally spilled upon the surface of a table in years gone by.

Such, then, was the origin of the reflector. The sharp of long ago was content to rely upon a small circular drop of wine, or whatever he happened to be drinking, carefully spilled upon the table immediately in front of him. Holding the cards over this drop, their faces would be

reflected from its surface, for the information of the sharp who was dealing them.

Times have advanced since then, however, and the sharp has advanced with the times. We live in an age of luxury. We are no longer satisfied with the rude appliances which sufficed for the simpler and less fastidious tastes of our forefathers; and in this respect at least the sharp is no exception to the general rule. He, too, has become more fastidious, and more exacting in his requirements, and his tastes are more expensive. His reflector, therefore, is no longer a makeshift; it is a well-constructed instrument, both optically and mechanically, costing him, to purchase, from two and a half to twenty-five dollars. Not shillings, bear in mind, but dollars. Think of it! Five pounds for a circular piece of looking-glass, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter! The fact that such a price is paid is sufficient to indicate the profitable character of the investment.

The first record we have of the employment of a specially constructed appliance of this kind describes a snuff-box bearing in the centre of the lid a small medallion containing a portrait. The sharp in taking a pinch of snuff pressed a secret spring, the effect of which was to substitute for the portrait a convex reflector. The snuff-box then being laid upon the table the cards were reflected from the surface of this mirror, giving the sharp a reduced image of each one as it was dealt. A de-

vice of this kind may have passed muster years ago, but it could never escape detection nowadays. At the present day card-players would be, unquestionably, 'up to snuff.'

Among the more modern appliances, the first to which we shall refer is that known as the 'table-reflector.' As its name implies, it is designed for the purpose of being attached to the card-table during the game. It is thus described in one of the price-lists.

'*Table-reflector.*—Fastens by pressing steel spurs into

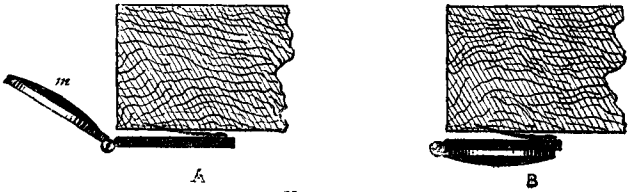


FIG. 20.

under side of table. A fine glass comes to the edge of table to read the cards as you deal them off. You can set the glass at any angle or turn it back out of sight in an instant.'

From the many samples similar to the above with which one meets in 'sporting' literature, the legitimate inference is that punctuation-marks are an expensive commodity in certain districts of America.

The reflector to which this paragraph refers is illustrated in fig. 20. It is a neat little contrivance, nicely finished and nickel-plated.

The mirror *m* is convex, forming as usual a reduced image of the card. A represents the position of the reflector whilst in use. B shows the manner in which it is turned back, out of the way and out of sight. The hinge is fitted with light friction-springs, which enable the mirror to retain any position in which it may be placed.

The correct way to 'play' the reflector is to press the steel point into the under side of the table, just sufficiently far back to bring the hinge about level with the lower edge of the table top. Whilst in use, the mirror, contrary to what one might suppose, is not inclined downwards, but the inclination given to it is an upward one as in the illustration. Thus, whilst the sharp is leaning slightly forward, as one naturally would, whilst dealing, the cards are reflected from the mirror as he looks back into it.

Used in this manner, the reflector can be played anywhere, and even those who are familiar with 'shiners' will 'stand' it. Inclined downwards, it may be easier to use, but in that case the dealer would have to lean back whilst distributing the cards. A proceeding such as that would be liable to attract attention and to arouse suspicions which, all things considered, had better be allowed to slumber if the sharp is to maintain that mental quietude so necessary to the carrying out of his plans. It is possible of course that nothing of the kind may occur, but, on the other hand, it might. One cannot be too careful, when even the most innocent actions are apt to

be misconstrued. The world is so uncharitable, that a little thing like the discovery of a bit of looking-glass might lead to a lot of unpleasantness. Who knows?

Should anyone happen to come behind the dealer whilst the mirror is in view, it can always be turned out of sight with the little finger in the act of taking up one's cards from the table, or by sitting very close it can be altogether concealed.

Another very efficient form of reflector is one so constructed as to be adaptable to the interior of a pipe-bowl. It consists of a small convex mirror, similar to the one used in the table reflector, which is cemented to a piece of cork shaped to fit inside the bowl of an ordinary briar-root pipe (fig. 21).

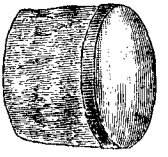


FIG. 21.

Such a device is more adapted to the requirements of the second or third-rate sharper, as it would not be available in a circle of cigarette-smoking 'Johnnies.' It is used in the following manner.

The 'shiner' is carried separately from the pipe, and held until required in the palm of the hand, with the cork downwards. The sharp having finished his pipe, stoops down to knock out the ashes, upon any convenient spot. As the hand is again brought up to the level of the table, the glass is pressed into the bowl of the pipe with the thumb. The pipe is then laid upon the table, with the

bowl facing towards its owner, a little to the left of where he is sitting. In this position the mirror is visible to no one but the sharp himself. He is therefore at liberty to make the freest use of it without exciting suspicion in the least.

Fig. 22 is a photograph of pipe and mirror *in situ*, which will give a far better idea of the convenience of this arrangement than any amount of explanation could possibly enable the reader to form. The card which is seen reflected in miniature was held at a distance from the mirror of about six inches.

Among the various forms in which reflectors are supplied, there are some attached to coins and rouleaux of coins of various values. Also there are some so constructed as to be attached to a pile of 'greenbacks' or bank-notes. The manner in which these are used will be readily understood, therefore there is no need to do more than refer to them. In addition to these, there is the appliance described in the catalogue as—'Reflector, attached to machine, can be brought to palm of hand at will.' This will be found described in the chapter on 'holdouts,' to which class of apparatus it properly belongs.

The smallest and most difficult to use of all reflectors is one the very existence of which is but little known, even among sharps, viz. the tooth-pick reflector. In this instance the mirror is a very tiny one adapted to lie at an angle within the interior of a large quill tooth-pick.

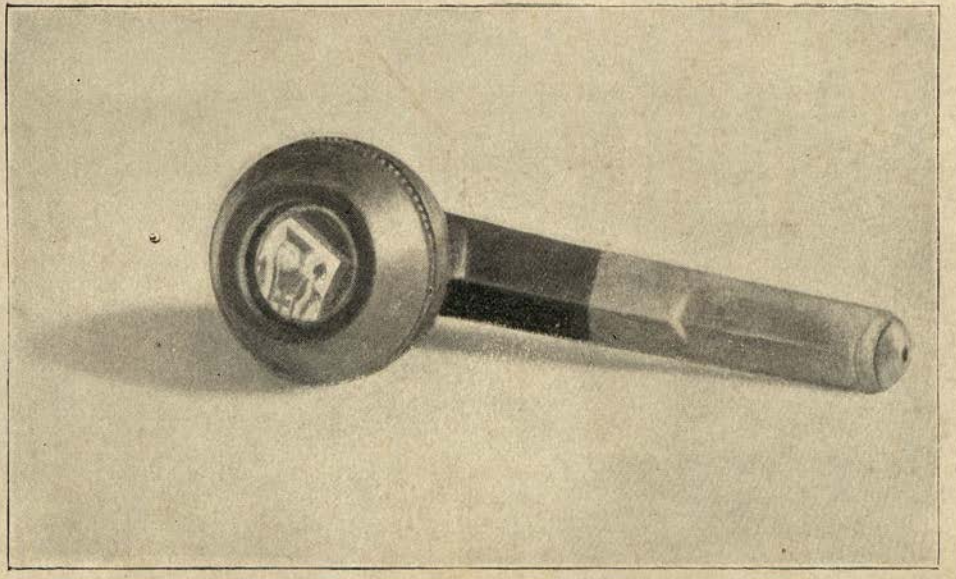


FIG. 22.—PIPE-REFLECTOR *IN SITU*

With the exception of its size, it is similar in other respects to the pipe-reflector already described. Needless to say, the extreme minuteness of the image formed by so small a mirror entirely precludes its use except by a sharp who is an expert indeed, and one whose vision is of the kēenest description: *m*, fig. 23, indicates the position occupied by the mirror within the interior of the quill. The noble bird—typical of all gamblers—from whose pinion the feather has been extracted for so unworthy a purpose, might well exclaim, 'To what base uses may we come!'

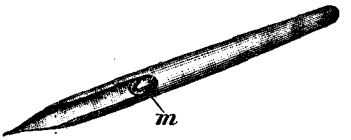


FIG. 23.

The operator who has adopted this form of instrument will enter the room where card-players are assembled, chewing his tooth-pick after the approved Piccadilly fashion of a few years ago. Having taken his place at the table, he throws down the tooth-pick in front of him, with the pointed end turned towards him. His mirror then comes into play, in the same manner as that of the pipe-reflector aforesaid.

One form of reflector which is very useful to the sharp in a single-handed game, is that mentioned in one of the catalogues as being intended to stand behind a pile of 'chips' or counters upon the table. It may appear to the uninitiated that there would be great

difficulty in concealing a mirror in this way. Such, undoubtedly, would be the case if only one pile of chips were used. By placing two piles side by side, however, the difficulty disappears. With counters, say, an inch and a quarter in diameter, there is ample space behind two piles, when standing close together, to accommodate and conceal a tolerably large reflector, as such things go.

The mirror in this case is mounted somewhat after the fashion of a linen-prover ; and precisely resembles a small hinge. The hinge being opened, reveals the reflector. It is set at a suitable angle and simply laid upon the table, either behind the rouleaux of counters, as explained above, or behind a pile of bank-notes, as may be most convenient. If the sharp should unhappily be compelled to part with either counters or notes—a circumstance, by the way, which should never occur in the ordinary course of events—though accidents will happen now and then—the reflector can be closed up and secreted in an instant.

It is a neat little device, and one well-worthy the notice of intending purchasers. (*See advt.*)

In connection with sharping of any kind, as in every other branch of art, whether sacred or profane, legal or illegal, one fact is always distinctly noticeable. No matter what improvements may be made, or what amount of complexity may be introduced into any

system, or into the appliances which have been invented to meet its requirements, the practice of its leading exponents always tends towards simplicity of operation. To this rule there are very few exceptions. The greatest minds are, as a rule, content to use the simplest methods. Not the easiest, bear in mind, but the simplest. The simple tools are generally more difficult to use with effect than the more elaborate ones. The great painter with no other tools than his palette-knife and his thumb will produce work which could not be imitated by a man of inferior talents, although he had the entire stock of Rowney or Winsor and Newton at his disposal. So, in like manner, is it with the really great expert in sharping. With a small unmounted mirror, and a bit of cobbler's wax, he will win more money than a duffer who possesses the most perfect mechanical arrangement ever adapted to a reflector. It is the quality of the man which tells, not that of his tools.

It may perhaps be asked then, if the simplest appliances are best, why is it that they are not generally adopted, in place of the more complicated devices. That, however, is just the same thing as asking why an organ-grinder is content to wind out machine-made airs during the whole of his existence, rather than to devote his time to the far less expensive process of learning to play an instrument. The answer is the same in both cases. It is simply that machinery is made to take the

place of skill. The machine can be obtained by the expenditure of so much or so little money, whilst the skill can only be obtained by a lifetime of practice. Your duffer, as a rule, does not care about hard work. He prefers a situation where all the hard work is put out, and the less irksome is done by somebody else. Hence the demand for cheating-tools which will throw the responsibility of success or failure upon the manufacturer, leaving the operator at liberty to acquire just as much skill as he pleases, or to do without skill altogether if he thinks fit.

According to one of the leading experts in America, the above-mentioned bit of cobbler's wax, in conjunction with the plain unmounted mirror, is by far the best method of employing a reflector. The mirror is simply attached, by means of the wax, to the palm of the hand near the edge ; and when it is fixed in this position, the little indices, usually found upon the corners of modern playing-cards, can be read quite easily. Furthermore, so situated, the reflector is quite secure from observation.

The majority of sharps, however, appear to strike the happy medium between the simplicity of this device and the complexity of the 'reflector attached to machine.' Thus, it is the table-reflector which appears to be the most popular for general use, although from its nature it is not well-adapted for use in a round game. There

are too many people to the right and left of the operator. For a single-handed game, however, where the sharp has no opportunity of 'getting his own cards in,' it is invaluable.

Supposing, then, for the moment, gentle reader, that you were a sharp, your plan of working the table-reflector would be as follows. You would find your 'mug' (first catch your hare), and perhaps you might induce him to invite you to his club. Having got your hand in to this extent, doubtless you would find means of persuading him to engage you in a game of cards, 'just to pass the time.' He thinks, no doubt, that he is perfectly safe, as the club cards are being used, and moreover being in all probability what is known in 'sporting' circles as a 'fly-flat'—that is, a fool who thinks himself wise—he imagines that he knows enough about cheating to 'spot' anyone who had the audacity to 'try it on' with him. Now, if there is one thing more certain than another, it is that a sharp is always safest in the hands of a man who thinks he knows a lot. The event will nearly always prove that his knowledge is limited to an imperfect acquaintance with some of the older forms of manipulation; things which have been discarded as obsolete by all practical men. Therefore, if he anticipates cheating at all, he prepares himself to look out for something vastly different to what is about to take place. His mind running in a groove, he is

preoccupied with matters which are of no importance to him; and thus falls an easy prey to the sharper.

In such a case, then, you have a 'soft thing.' You select a table which affords you the opportunity of securing a nice, convenient seat, with your back to the wall. You fix your 'shiner' just under the edge of the table, and engage your 'pigeon' in a single-handed game of poker. If you are worth your salt, you ought to pluck him—nay, *skin him*, for all he is worth.

CHAPTER V

HOLDOUTS

THE term 'Holdout' is the name given to a mechanical contrivance, constructed with the object of enabling the card-sharper to 'hold-out,' or conceal one or more cards, until such time as he finds that they will be useful to him by turning the balance of fortune in his favour at some critical point of the game. They are obviously unavailable in those games where the whole pack is distributed among the players, as the cards abstracted must in that case necessarily be missed.

It will be seen, then, that although the name may appear clumsy and puerile, it is notwithstanding well chosen and expressive. The gambler 'holds out' inducements to the cheat; the market, provided by cheating, 'holds out' inducements to the manufacturer; the manufacturer 'holds out' inducements to purchase his machines; and the machines themselves 'hold out' inducements which very few sharpers can resist. It is like the nursery-rhyme of the dog that was eventually 'purwailed on' to get over the stile.

As far as we have yet travelled upon our explorations into the regions of fraud and chicanery, yclept 'sharping,' our path has been, comparatively speaking, a rosy one. The way has been by no means intricate, and the difficulties we have had to encounter have been but few. At this point, however, the course runs through a region which is, to some extent, beset with thorn and bramble, in the guise of mechanical contrivances having a more or less complex character. The non-technical reader, however, has no cause for being appalled at the nature of the ground which he is invited to traverse; the author undertakes to render his travelling easy, and to put *him* through, as it were, by 'Pullman-Express.' One should always endeavour to popularise science whenever the opportunity serves. The mechanically minded reader, at any rate, will revel in the examples of human ingenuity—and corruptibility—which are here presented for the first time to his admiring gaze.

As in all other instances of means well-adapted to a given end, these utensils of the holdout persuasion have taken their origin from extremely simple and antiquated devices. Perhaps we are not correct in saying 'extremely antiquated,' since 'Cavendish' is of opinion that cards have not been invented more than five hundred years. Those, however, who attribute their invention to the Chinese, æons before the dawn of western civilisation,

will be inclined to the belief that the 'Heathen Chinee' of succeeding ages must have coerced the smiles of fortune, with the friendly aid of a holdout, centuries before the discovery of the land of that instrument's second or third nativity.

As to this debatable point, however, there is very little hope that we shall ever be better informed than at present. It belongs to the dead things of the dead past; it is shrouded in the mist of antiquity and buried beneath the withered leaves of countless generations; among which might be found the decayed refuse of many a family tree, whose fall could be directly traced to the invention of the deadly implements known as playing cards. Do not let the reader imagine for a moment that I am inveighing against the use of cards, when employed as an innocent means of recreation. That is not my intention by any means. Such a thing would savour of narrow-mindedness and bigotry, and should be discouraged in every possible way. The means of rendering our existence here below as mutually agreeable as circumstances will permit are by no means so plentiful that we can afford to dispense with so enjoyable a pastime as a game of cards. It is not the fault of the pieces of pasteboard that some people have been ruined by their means; it is the fault of the players themselves. Had cards never been invented, the result would have been very similar. Those who are

addicted to gambling, in the absence of cards, would have spun coins, drawn straws, or engaged in some other equally intellectual recreation. When a man has arrived at the state of mind which induces him to make 'ducks and drakes' of his property, and a fool of himself, there is no power on earth that can prevent him from so doing.

But to return. The earliest account we have of anything in the holdout line is the cuff-box described by Houdin. I for one, however, am inclined to think that there is a slight tinge of the apocryphal in the record as given by him. My reason for this opinion is twofold. In the first place the description is singularly lacking in detail, considering Houdin's mechanical genius; and secondly, the difficulty of constructing and using such an apparatus would be for all practical purposes insuperable. I should say that Houdin had never seen the machine; and that he trusted too implicitly to hearsay, without exercising his judgment. Of course there is nothing but internal evidence to support this view; still, I cannot help believing that part at least of the great Frenchman's account must be taken 'cum grano.' In any event, however, we are bound to admit that something in the nature of a holdout was known to some persons in the early part of the present century.

Houdin entitles the device above referred to—'La

boite à la manche ;' and his description is to the following effect.

A box sufficiently large to contain a pack of cards was concealed somewhere in the fore part of the sharp's coat-sleeve. In picking up the pack, preparatory to dealing, the forearm was lightly pressed upon the table. The box was so constructed that this pressure had the effect of throwing out the prepared or pre-arranged pack previously put into it, and at the same time a pair of pincers seized the pack in use, and withdrew it to the interior of the box, in exchange for the one just ejected. In his autobiography, Houdin recounts an incident in which this box played a prominent part. A sharp had utilised it with great success for some time, but at last the day came when his unlucky star was in the ascendant. The pincers failed to perform their function properly, and instead of removing the genuine pack entirely, they left one card upon the table. From the description given of the apparatus, one may imagine that such a contingency would be very likely to arise. The dupe of course discovered the extra card, accused the sharp of cheating—and not without reason, it must be admitted—challenged him to a duel, and shot him. Serve him right, you say? Well, we will not contest the point.

The substitution of one pack for another appears to be the earliest conception of anything approximate to the process of holding-out cards until they are required. All

sorts of pockets, in every conceivable position, appear to have been utilised by the sharps of long ago, for the purpose of concealing the packs which they sought to introduce into the game. This necessarily could only be done at a period when plain-backed cards were generally used. The sharp of to-day would want a goodly number of pockets, if it were necessary for him to be able to replace any pattern among the cards which he might be called upon to use.

Holding out, however, in the true sense of the term, became a power in the hands of the sharp only with the introduction, and the reception into popular favour, of games such as Poker, in which the cards are not all dealt out, and the possession of even one good card, in addition to a hand which, apart from fraud, proves to be decent, is fraught with such tremendous advantages to the sharp who has contrived to secrete it.

The earliest example of a card being systematically held out until it could be introduced into the game with advantage to the player, is probably that of the sharp who, during play, was always more or less afflicted with weariness, and consequently with a perpetual desire to stretch himself and yawn. It was noticed after a while that he always had a good hand after yawning ; a singular fact, and unaccountable. Doubtless the occultists of that day sought to establish some plausible connection between the act of stretching and the caprices of chance. If so,

there is very little question that, according to their usual custom, they discovered some super-normal, and (to themselves) satisfactory hypothesis, to account for the influence of lassitude upon the fortunes of the individual. In accordance with the usual course of events in such instances, however, the occult theory would be unable to retain its hold for long. The super-normal always resolves itself into the normal, when brought under the influence of practical common-sense. In this particular case the explanation was of the simplest. Having secreted a card in the palm of his hand, the sharp, under cover of the act of stretching, would just stick it under the collar of his coat as he sat with his back to the wall. When the card was required for use, a second yawn with the accompanying stretch would bring it again into his hand. This, then, was the first real holdout—the back of a man's coat collar.[1]

Since that time the ingenuity of the cheating community has been unremittingly applied to the solution of the problem of making a machine which would enable them to hold out cards without risk of detection. That their efforts have been crowned with complete success we have the best of reasons for believing, inasmuch as

[1] Even the modern sharp sometimes uses a method quite as simple. He will put the cards he wishes to hold out under his knee-joint, and when he requires to use them, he will hitch his chair closer to the table, taking the cards into his hand as he does so. This device is called in France the 'coup de cuisse.'

holdouts which can be used without a single visible movement being made, and without the least fear of creating suspicion, are articles of commerce at the present moment. You have only to write to one of the dealers, inclosing so many dollars, and you can be set up for life. No doubt you can obtain the names and addresses of these gentlemen without difficulty; but since the object of this book is not to supply them with gratuitous advertisement, their local habitation will not be given herein, although their wares are prominently mentioned.

In order that the reader may fully appreciate the beauty and value of the latest and most improved devices, we will run lightly over the gamut of the various instruments which have been introduced from time to time. This course is the best to pursue, since even among the earlier appliances there are some which, if well-worked, are still to be relied upon in certain companies, and indeed *are* relied upon by many a sharp who considers himself 'no slouch.'

There is every reason to believe that the first contrivance which proved to be of any practical use was one designated by the high-sounding and euphonious title of 'The Bug.' Your sharp has always an innate sense of the fitness of things, and an unerring instinct which prompts him to reject all things but those which are beautiful and true. Ample evidence of this is not want-

ing, even in such simple matters as the names he gives to the tools employed in his handicraft.

'The Bug' would appear to be an insect which may be relied upon at all times, and in whose aid the fullest confidence may be placed. In fact, there is a saying to the effect that the bug has never been known to fail the enterprising naturalist who has been fortunate enough to secure a specimen, and that it has never been detected in use.

This entomological curiosity is illustrated in fig. 24,

FIG. 24.—'The Bug.'

and is thus described in the catalogue of one indefatigable collector.

'The Bug.' A little instrument easily carried in your vest pocket, that can be used at a moment's notice to hold out one or more cards in any game. Simple yet safe and sure. Price $1,00.

Such then are the general characteristics of the species; but since the reader will probably desire a more intimate acquaintance with its habits and its structural details, the following description is appended.

In its essential features the bug is simply a straight piece of watchspring, bent—as Paddy might say—at one

end. The end nearest the bend is inserted into the handle of a very small shoemaker's awl. There is nothing else 'to it' whatever. The point of the awl is stuck into the under side of the table, in such a manner that the spring lies flat against the table top, or nearly so, the point of the spring projecting beyond the edge of the table to the extent of about one-eighth of an inch.

The cards having been dealt out (say for Poker), the sharp takes up those which have fallen to his hand, and stands them on edge upon the table, with their faces towards him, holding them with both hands. The card or cards which he wishes to hold out are then brought in front of the others, and with the thumbs they are quietly slid under the table between it and the spring. In this position they are perfectly concealed, and may be allowed to remain until required. When again wanted, these cards are simply pulled out by the two thumbs, as the sharp draws his other cards towards him with a sweeping motion. Thus, by selecting a good card here and there, as the succeeding hands are played, the sharp acquires a reserve of potential energy sufficient to overcome a great deal of the inertia with which he would otherwise be handicapped by the fluctuations of fortune.

The next form of holdout which falls beneath our notice is that known as the 'Cuff Holdout.' Let us see how the genius of the maker describes it.

'Cuff Holdout. Weighs two ounces, and is a neat

invention to top the deck, to help a partner, or hold out a card playing Stud Poker, also good to play the half stock in Seven Up. This holdout works in shirt sleeves and holds the cards in the same place as a cuff-pocket. There is no part of the holdout in sight at any time. A man that has worked a pocket will appreciate this invention. Price, by registered mail, $10,00.'

The cuff-pocket, above alluded to, was a very early invention. As its name indicates, it was a pocket inside the coat sleeve, the opening to which was situated on the under side at the seam joining sleeve and cuff. In fig. 25 '*a*' denotes the opening of the pocket.

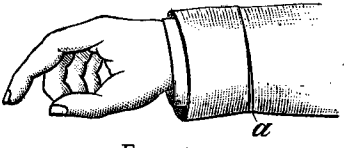


FIG. 25.

In a game of Poker it would be employed as follows. Whilst shuffling the cards, the sharp would contrive to get three of a kind at the top of the pack. He would then insert his little finger between these three cards and the rest, the pack being in the left hand. Then holding his hand in front of him he would reach across it with the other, for the (apparently) simple purpose of laying down his cigar, upon his extreme left, or if he were not smoking he might lean over in the same manner to 'monkey with his chips' (*i.e.* to arrange his counters). In this position the orifice of the pocket would come level

with the front end of the pack, the latter being completely covered by his right arm. This would give him an opportunity of pushing the three selected cards into the pocket, where they would remain until he had dealt out all the cards and given off all the 'draft' except his own. Still holding the pack in his left hand, and his hand in front of him, he would again cross his right hand over, this time for the purpose of taking up and examining his own hand of cards, which he had taken the precaution of dealing well to the left, to give him an excuse for crossing his hands. He would then remove the cards from the cuff-pocket to the top of the pack, and lay the whole down upon the table. His manœuvring having been successful so far, he would now throw away three indifferent cards from his hand and deliberately help himself to the three top cards of the pack. These, of course, would be the three (aces for preference) which he had previously had concealed in the pocket. Thus, he is bound to have a 'full,' in any case. If he had been so fortunate as to possess another ace among the cards which fell to his hand on the deal, he would have a 'four'; which can only be beaten when 'straights' are played by a 'straight flush'—in other words, a sequence of five cards, all of the same suit. His chances of 'winning the pot,' then, are infinite as compared with those of the other players.

The great disadvantage of the cuff-pocket was the

difficulty of removing the cards when once they had been put into it. To facilitate their removal, therefore, the pocket was sometimes provided with a slide, having a projecting stud, which could be drawn with the finger. This would throw the cards out into the hand.

This description will serve to enlighten the reader as to the advantages to be gained by substituting the cuff-

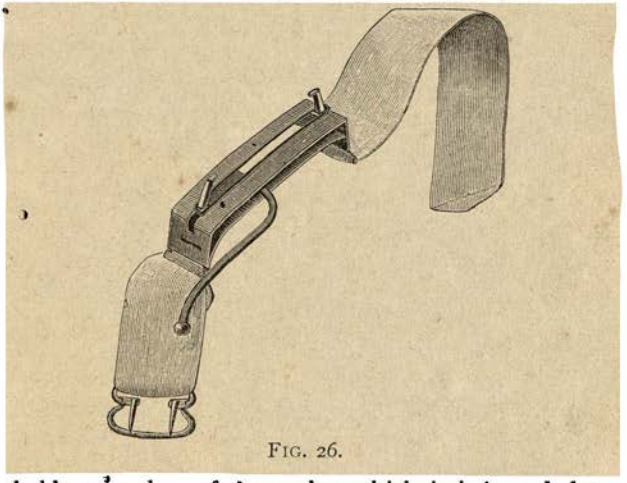


FIG. 26.

holdout in place of the pocket which it is intended to supplant. It fulfils its purpose in a much more perfect manner, being far easier to use, and requiring less skill on the part of the operator.

Referring to fig. 26, it will be seen that this instrument consists practically of a pair of jaws, which, being movable, will separate sufficiently to allow a card to be

held between them. These jaws are drawn towards each other by means of an elastic band slipped over them. Elastic is the material commonly used in the springs of holdouts, being readily replaced when worn out or otherwise deteriorated. The projecting lever situated at the side of the machine is for the purpose of separating the jaws when the cards are to be withdrawn. The act of pressing it to one side releases the cards, and at the same time throws up a little arm from the body of the holdout, which thrusts them out.

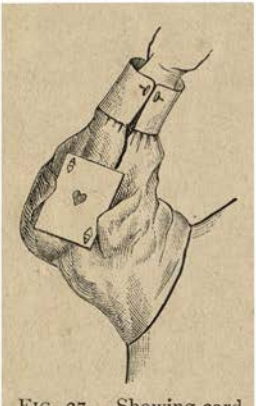


FIG. 27. - Showing card held under the arm.

The machine is strapped around the fore-arm with the jaws underneath, and is worn inside the sleeve of the coat or, if playing in shirt-sleeves, inside the shirt-sleeve. Acting from the inside it will hold a card or cards against the under surface of the sleeve, in which position they are concealed from view by the arm. The hands being crossed, as in the case of the cuff-pocket, the cards are simply slipped between the jaws, where they are held until required. The hands being crossed for the second time, the lever is pressed and the cards fall upon the top of the pack, which is held underneath at the moment. This operation

is termed technically 'topping the deck.' Fig. 27 shows the manner in which the cards are held by this machine.

An extremely simple form of appliance, and one which may be utilised with effect, is that known as the 'ring holdout.' It is merely a small piece of watch-spring fitted with a clip, enabling it to be attached to an ordinary finger-ring. Between this spring and palm of the hand the cards are held (fig. 28).

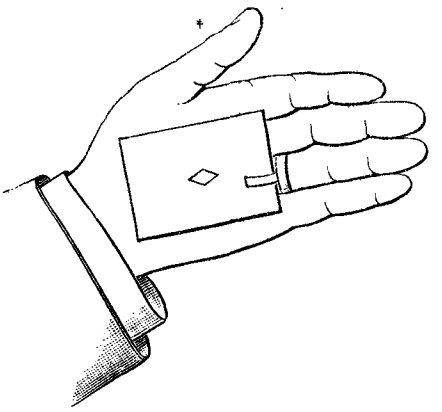


FIG. 28.—Ring Holdout.

With a little practice the deck may be topped, hands made up or shifted, and cards held out in a manner which is far safer and better than any 'palming,' however skilfully it may be done. Needless to say, the cards used must not be too large, or the operator's hand too small if this device is to be employed.

We now come to the subject of coat and vest machines, among which are to be found some of the

finest examples of mechanical genius as applied to the art of cheating.

The earliest vest machine was a clumsy utensil covering nearly the whole of the wearer's chest. It was called—not inaptly—by the gambling fraternity of the time the 'Breast-plate.'

Like all other ideas, however, which contain the germ of a great principle, this conception has been improved upon, until it has developed into an invention worthy of the noble end which it is intended to fulfil.

In its latest and most improved form, as widely used at the present day, it is illustrated in fig. 29.

As a thorough acquaintance with the construction and working of this machine will be of great assistance to us in arriving at an understanding of those which follow, we will go into it somewhat exhaustively with the aid of the lettering in the illustration.

Referring then to fig 29, *a* is a slide which is free to move in the direction of the length of the base-plate *b*. It is held in position and guided by means of fittings which pass through the slot cut in the base-plate. This slide is composed of two thin plates of metal between which the cards are held as shown, and is protected by the cover *c*, which is removable, and which is hinged when in use to lugs provided for the purpose upon the base-plate. The ends of base-plate and cover farthest from the hinge-joint are each pierced with a row of

small holes. These are to facilitate the sewing of the apparatus to the divided edges of a seam.

Attached to the upper surface of the slide will be seen thin strips of metal, bent into somewhat of the

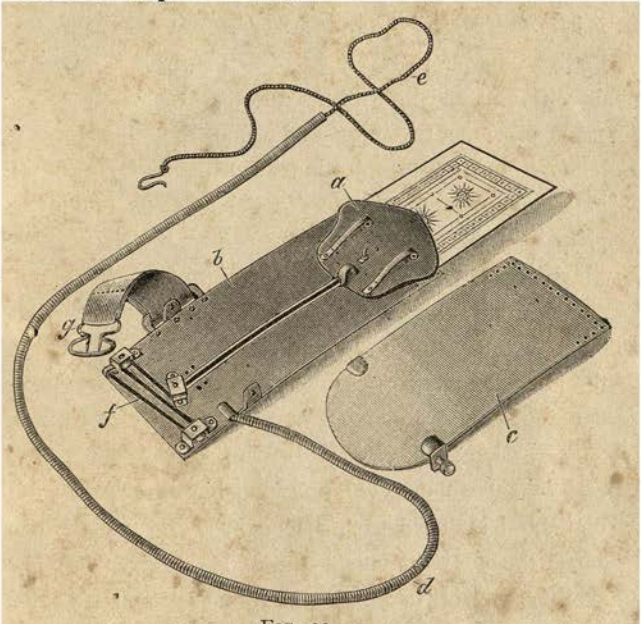


FIG. 29.

form of a bow. In practice these are covered with cloth, to prevent the noise they would otherwise make in rubbing against the cover. As the slide moves forward into the position it occupies in the figure these projecting strips, pressing against the cover, tend to thrust base-

plate and cover apart. This action separates the edges of the seam to which those parts of the apparatus are respectively sewn, and provides an aperture for the entrance or the exit of the slide, together with the cards it is holding out. As the slide returns to the other end of the base-plate, the cloth-covered strips fall within the curvature of the cover, thus allowing the edges of the seam to come together; and when the slide is right home, the central projecting strip passes beyond the hinge-joint, thus tending to press the free ends of base-plate and cover into intimate contact. The opening which has been fabricated in the seam is thus securely closed, and nothing amiss can be seen.

The to-and-fro movement of the slide is effected in the following manner. Attached at one end to the base-plate is a flexible tube *d*, consisting simply of a helix of wire closely coiled. Through this tube passes a cord *e*, one end of which is led around pulleys below the base-plate, and attached to the slide in such a manner that, when the cord is pulled, the slide is drawn into the position shown. To the other end of the cord is fastened a hook for the purpose of attaching it to the 'tab' or loop at the back of the operator's boot. It may be here mentioned that the cord used in this and all similar machines is a very good quality of fishing-line. The slide is constantly drawn towards its normal position within the machine by the piece of elastic *f*. The band

g with the buckle attached is intended to support the machine within the coat or vest.

The foregoing description necessarily partakes of the nature of Patent Office literature, but it is hoped that the reader will be enabled to digest it, and thereby form some idea of this interesting invention.

Although it is both a coat and vest machine, this apparatus is more convenient to use when fastened inside the coat, as the front edges of that garment are readier to hand than those of the waistcoat. The edge of the right breast is unpicked, and the machine is sewn into the gap. The flexible tube is passed down the left trouser-leg, inside which the hook hangs at the end of the cord ready for attachment to the boot.

When the operator is seated at the table, he seizes a favourable opportunity of hooking the cord to the loop of his boot, and all is ready. Having obtained possession of the cards he wishes to hold out, he holds them flat in his hand, against his breast. Then, by merely stretching his leg, the cord is pulled, the seam of the coat opens (the aperture being covered, however, by his arm) and out comes the end of the slide. The cards are quietly inserted into the slide ; the leg is drawn up, and —hey, presto ! the cards have disappeared. When they are again required, another movement of the leg will bring them into the operator's hand.

One can readily see how useful a device of this kind

would be in a game of the 'Nap' order. Having abstracted a good hand from the pack (five cards 'never would be missed') it could be retained in the holdout as long as might be necessary. Upon finding oneself possessed of a bad hand, the concealed cards could be brought out, and the others hidden until it came to one's turn to deal, and then they could be just thrown out on to the pack.

The price of this little piece of apparatus is $25.00, and, doubtless, it is worth the odd five, being well made and finished up to look pretty. In fact, it is quite a mantelboard ornament, as most of these things are. Evidently, the sharp, whilst possessing the crafty and thieving instincts of the magpie, has also the magpie's predilection for things which are bright and attractive. Therefore his implements are made resplendent with nickel and similar precious metals. Although electro-plating or something of the kind is necessary to prevent rust and corrosion, one would be inclined to think that articles which are intended to escape observation would be better adapted to their end if they were protected by some method just a trifle less obtrusive in its brilliancy. However, that is not our business. If the buyers are satisfied, what cause have *we* to complain?

The 'Kepplinger' vest or coat machine, which is referred to in the Catalogue (p. 293), is exactly the same thing as that just described, with the addition of Kep-

plinger's method of pulling the string, which will be described further on.

The 'Arm Pressure' vest machine, mentioned in the same Catalogue, is a modification of the old 'Jacob's Ladder' sleeve holdout, to which we shall have occasion to revert presently. In an earlier edition of the Catalogue the arm-pressure machine is thus eulogised :—

'New Vest Machine. Guaranteed to be the best Vest Machine made. This machine weighs about three ounces, and is used half-way down the vest, where it comes natural to hold your hands and cards. The work is done with one hand and the lower part of the same arm. You press against a small lever with the arm (an easy pressure of three-quarters of an inch throws out the cards back of a few others held in your left hand), and you can reach over to your checks or do anything else with your right hand while working the Hold-Out. The motions are all natural and do not cause suspicion. The machine is held in place by a web belt; you don't have to sew anything fast, but when you get ready to play you can put on the machine and when through can remove it in half a minute. There are no plates, and no strings to pull on, and no springs that are liable to break or get out of order. This machine is worth fifty of the old style Vest Plates for practical use, and you will say the same after seeing one.'

The statement guaranteeing this to be the best vest

machine ever made has been expunged of late, as will be noticed in the reproduction of the Catalogue upon page 294. In reality it is not nearly so efficient as the Kepplinger, all statements and opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. Its construction will be readily understood from the description of the 'Jacob's Ladder' which follows next in order.

This brings us, then, to the subject of sleeve machines, or appliances whereby the sharp, like Ah Sin, the 'Heathen Chinee,' who understood so well 'the game he did not understand,' is enabled to have a few cards up his sleeve. 'Up his sleeve!' How those words suggest the explanation so often given by the innocent-minded public to account for the disappearance of the various articles which slip so nimbly through a conjurer's fingers. And yet, if they only knew it, that is about the last place in the world that a conjurer, as a rule, would use as a receptacle for anything. Of course there is no Act of Parliament to prevent him, should he desire to do so; but that's another story. With the sharp, however, there are several Acts of Parliament to prevent *him* from using his sleeve for any such purpose; and yet he often resorts to it. How true is the saying that 'one man may steal a horse, whilst another may not look over the hedge.'

As far as can be ascertained, the 'Jacob's Ladder' was the forerunner of all other sleeve holdouts. It was

fastened to the under side of the fore-arm, and worked by pressure upon the table. Its construction was essentially that of a pair of lazy-tongs, arranged as in figs. 30 and 31. The base-plate carrying the working parts was curved so as

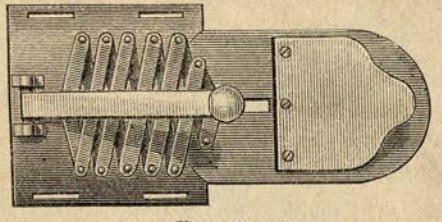


FIG. 30.

to lie closely against the arm and hold the machine steady whilst in use. The 'lazy-tongs' device was fixed to the base-plate at one end, the other being free to move, and carrying the clip for the cards. Situated at an angle above the 'tongs' was a lever, also attached at one end to the

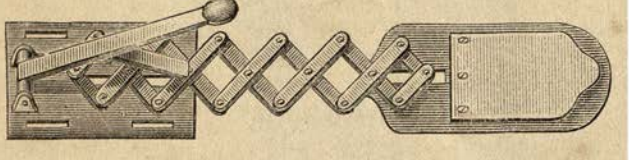


FIG. 31.

base-plate, the other end terminating in a knob. Halfway down this lever was hinged a connecting-rod, joining the lever with the second joint of the 'tongs.' Pressure being applied to the knob, the connecting-rod would force

out the joint to which it was attached ; and the motion being multiplied by each successive joint, the clip was caused to protrude beyond the coat cuff. In this position the card could be inserted or removed as in the cases already noticed. The clip was returned to its place within the sleeve by means of a rubber band.

Some of these 'Jacob's Ladder' sleeve machines are made to work by pulling a string, after the manner of the coat and vest machine already described. Those advertised at $50.00 are of this description.

The advantage of a machine of this kind is of course found in the fact that the cards are brought directly into the hand. This particular form, however, was very difficult to use, as the cards were always liable to catch in the cuff, a circumstance which is obviously much to the detriment of the apparatus. There is also the further disadvantage of being compelled to wear an abnormally large shirt-cuff, which in itself would attract attention among men who had their wits about them.

The enormous facilities for unostentatious operation afforded by a machine working inside the sleeve were too readily apparent to allow of the sleeve holdout falling into disuse. It was the kind of thing which must inevitably be improved upon, until it became of practical utility. And such has been the case. The very finest holdout the world has ever seen is that known as the Kepplinger or San Francisco. This machine in its latest

forms is certainly a masterpiece. Yet so little appreciation has the world for true genius, that the inventor of this marvellous piece of apparatus is practically unknown to the vast majority of his fellow-men.

Kepplinger was a professional gambler; that is what *he* was. In other words, he was a sharp—and of the sharpest.

As to the date at which this bright particular Star of the West first dawned upon the horizon of 'Tom Tiddler's Ground' deponent sayeth not. Neither have we any substantial record of the facts connected with the conception and elaboration of that great idea with which his name is associated. Of its introduction into the field of practical utility, however, and its subsequent revelation to the fraternity to whom its existence was of the utmost consequence, the details are available, and therefore may be revealed. The event occurred in this wise, as follows, that is to say :—

In the year of grace 1888, Kepplinger, the inventor, gambler and cheat, was resident and pursuing his daily avocations in the city known colloquially as ''Frisco.'

Now it is a singular feature of human nature that, whatever a man's calling may be, however arduous or exacting, he becomes in course of time so much a creature of habit that he is never really happy apart from it. One may suppose that it is the consciousness of ability to do certain things, and to do them well, which accounts for this fact.

At any rate, the fact remains. We are all alike in this respect—especially some of us. The barrister at leisure will prefer to sit in Court and watch another conducting a case ; the actor with an evening to spare will go and see someone else act ; the omnibus-driver with a day off will perch himself upon a friend's vehicle, and ride to and fro ; and the sharp will infallibly spend his leisure moments in gambling. When there are no dupes to be plundered, no 'pigeons' who have a feather left to fly with, the 'rooks' will congregate in some sequestered spot, and enjoy a quiet game all to themselves. And they play fairly? Yes—if they are obliged to do so ; not otherwise. They will cheat each other if they can. Honour amongst thieves ! Nonsense.

In 1888, then, Kepplinger's relaxation for some months consisted of a 'hard game' with players who were all professional sharps like himself. The circle was composed entirely of men who thought they 'knew the ropes' as well as he did. In that, however, they were considerably in error. He was acquainted with a trick worth any two which they could have mentioned. However much the fortunes of the others might vary, Kepplinger never sustained a loss. On the contrary, he always won. The hands he held were enough to turn any gambler green with envy, and yet, no one could detect him in cheating. His companions were, of course, all perfectly familiar with the appliances of their craft.

Holdouts in a game of that description would have been, one would think, useless incumbrances. The players were all too well acquainted with the signs and tokens accompanying such devices, and Kepplinger gave no sign of the employment of anything of the kind. He sat like a statue at the table, he kept his cards right away from him, he did not move a muscle as far as could be seen; his opponents could look up his sleeve almost to the elbow, and yet *he won.*

This being the condition of affairs, it was one which could not by any stretch of courtesy be considered satisfactory to anyone but Kepplinger himself. Having borne with the untoward circumstances as long as their curiosity and cupidity would allow them, his associates at length resolved upon concerted action. Arranging their plan of attack, they arrived once again at the rendezvous, and commenced the game as usual. Then, suddenly and without a moment's warning, Kepplinger was seized, gagged, and held hard and fast.

Then the investigation commenced. The great master-cheat was searched, and upon him was discovered the most ingenious holdout ever devised.

What did the conspirators do then? Did they 'lay into him' with cudgels, or 'get the drop' on him with 'six-shooters'? Did they, for instance, hand him over to the Police? No! ten thousand times no! They did none of those things, nor had they ever any intention

of doing anything of the kind. Being only human—and sharps—they did what they considered would serve their own interests best. A compact was entered into, whereby Kepplinger agreed to make a similar instrument to the one he was wearing for each of his captors, and once again the temporary and short-lived discord gave place to harmony and content.

Had Kepplinger been content to use less frequently the enormous advantage he possessed, and to have exercised more discretion in winning, appearing to lose sometimes, his device might have been still undiscovered.

It was thus, then, that the secret leaked out, and probably without the occurrence of this 'little rift within the lute'—or should it be *loot*?—the reader might not have had this opportunity of inspecting the details of the 'Kepplinger' or 'San Francisco' holdout.

This form of sleeve machine will be easily understood by the reader who has followed the description of the coat and vest holdout already given upon referring to fig. 32 upon the opposite page, the illustration being a diagrammatic representation of the various parts of the apparatus.

It is evident that we are here brought into contact with a greater complexity of strings, wheels, joints, tubes, pulleys, and working parts generally than it has hitherto been our lot to encounter. There is, however, nothing which is superfluous among all these things. Every

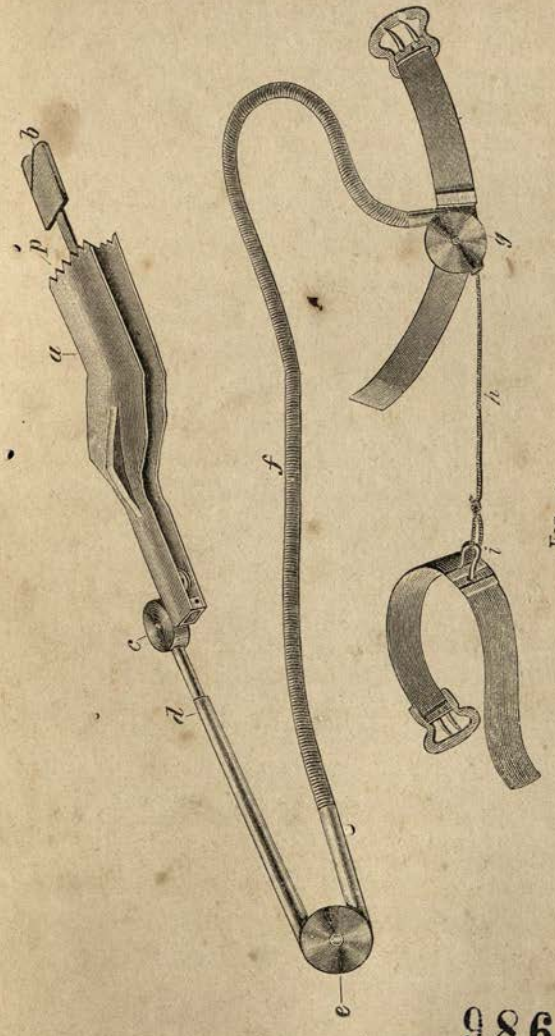


FIG. 32.

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detail of the apparatus is absolutely necessary to secure its efficiency. The holdout itself, *a*, is similar in construction to the coat and vest machine, except that it is longer, and that the slide *b* has a greater range of movement.

The machine is worn with a special shirt, having a double sleeve and a false cuff. This latter is to obviate the necessity of having 'a clean boiled shirt,' and the consequent trouble of fixing the machine to it, more frequently than is absolutely necessary.

It will be seen that the free ends of the base-plate and cover, instead of being pierced with holes, as in the vest machine, are serrated, forming a termination of sharp points (*p*). These are for the purpose of facilitating the adaptation of the machine to the operator's shirt-sleeve, which is accomplished in the following manner. In the wristband of the inner sleeve a series of little slits is cut with a penknife, and through these slits the points upon the base-plate are thrust. The base-plate itself is then sewn to the sleeve with a few stitches, one or two holes being made in the plate to allow this to be done readily. Thus the points are prevented from being accidentally withdrawn from the slits, and the whole apparatus is firmly secured to the sleeve. In the lower edge of the false cuff slits are cut in a similar manner, and into these the points of the cover are pushed. The cuff is held securely to the cover by means of little

strings, which are tied to holes provided for the purpose in the sides of the cover. These arrangements having been made, the shirt, with the machine attached, is ready to be worn. The operator having put it on, takes a shirt stud with rather a long stem, and links the inner sleeve round his wrist. Then he fastens the false cuff to the inner sleeve by buttoning the two lower stud-holes over the stud already at his wrist. Thus, the inner sleeve and the cuff are held in close contact by the base-plate and cover of the machine. Finally, he fastens the outer sleeve over the whole, by buttoning it over the long stud which already holds the inner sleeve and the cuff. Thus, the machine is concealed between the two sleeves. If one were able to look inside the operator's cuff whilst the machine is in action, it would appear as though the wristband and cuff came apart, and the cards were protruded through the opening. The points, then, are the means whereby the double sleeve is held open while the machine is in operation, and closed when it is at rest.

From the holdout, the cord which works the slide is led to the elbow-joint, where it passes around a pulley (*c*). This joint, like all the others through which the cord has to pass, is what is known as 'universal'; that is to say, it allows of movement in any direction. From the elbow to the shoulder the cord passes through an adjustable tube (*d*). The telescopic arrangement of

the tube is to adapt it to the various lengths of arm in different operators. At the shoulder-joint (*e*) is another universal pulley-wheel, which is fastened up to the shoulder by a band of webbing or any other convenient means. At this point begins the flexible tube of coiled wire, which enables the cord to adapt itself to every movement of the wearer, and yet to work without much friction (*f*). The flexible tube terminates at the knee in a third pulley (*g*), attached to the leg by a garter of webbing. The cord (*h*) now passes through an opening in the seam of the trouser-leg and across to the opposite knee, where through a similar opening projects a hook (*i*), over which the loop at the end of the cord is placed.

It must not be imagined that the sharp walks about with his knees tethered together with a piece of string, and a hook sticking out from one leg; or even that he would be at ease with the knowledge of having a seam on each side unpicked for a distance of two inches or so. That would be what he might call 'a bit too thick.' No; when the sharp sits down to the table, nothing of any such a nature is visible. Nor when he rises from the game should we be able to discover anything wrong with his apparel. He is much too knowing for that. The arrangement he adopts is the following:—

At each knee of the trousers, where the seams are split open, the gap thus produced is rendered secure

again, and free from observation, by means of the little spring-clip shown in fig. 33. This contrivance is sewn into the seam, being perforated to facilitate that operation. When closed, it keeps the edges of the opening so well together that one could never suspect the seam of having been tampered with. When it is required to open the gap, the ends of the clip are pressed with the finger and thumb (B, fig 33). This

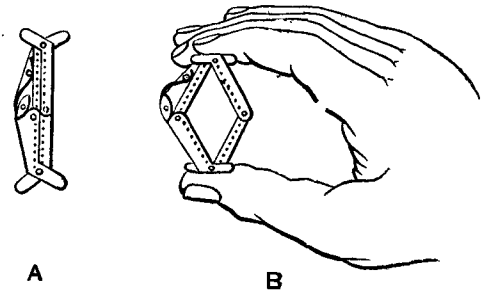

FIG. 33.—Seam-clips, A and B.

instantly produces a lozenge-shaped opening in the seam, and allows of the connection between the knees being made.

When the sharp sits down to play, then, he first presses open these clips ; next, he draws out the cord, which has hitherto lain concealed within the trouser-leg, and brings into position the hook, which, turning upon a pivot, has until now rested flat against his leg : lastly, he passes the loop at the end of the cord over the hook,

and all is in readiness. These operations require far less time to accomplish than to describe.

The sharp being thus harnessed for the fray, it becomes apparent that by slightly spreading the knees, the string is tightened, and by this means the slide within the body of the holdout is thrust out, through the cuff, into his hand. The cards which he desires to hold out being slightly bent, so as to adapt themselves to the curve of the cuff, and placed in the slide, the knees are brought together, and the cards are drawn up into the machine.

At the conclusion of the game the cord is unhooked, and tucked back through the seam; the hook is turned round, so that it lies flat; and finally the apertures are closed by pressing the sides of the clips together.

There is one point in connection with the practical working of the machine which it may be as well to mention. The pulley *g* at the end of the flexible tube is not fixed to the knee permanently, or the sharp would be unable to stand up straight, with the tube only of the requisite length; and if it were made long enough to reach from knee to shoulder whilst he was in a standing position, there would be a good deal too much slack when he came to sit down. This pulley, therefore, is detachable from the band of webbing, and is fixed to it when required by means of a socket into which it fits with a spring-catch.

Such then, is the Kepplinger holdout; and the selling-price of the apparatus complete is $100.00. If there were any inventor's rights in connection with this class of machinery, doubtless the amount charged would be very much higher. Governments as a rule, however, do not recognise any rights whatever as appertaining to devices for use in the unjust appropriation of other people's goods or money—at least, not when such devices are employed by an individual. In the case of devices which form part of the machinery of government, the Official Conscience is, perhaps, less open to the charge of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. What is sauce for the (individual) goose is not sauce for the (collective) gander. However, two wrongs would not make a right, and perhaps all is for the best.

Before leaving the subject of holdouts, there is one other form to which it is necessary to refer, viz. the table holdout. It is thus described by the maker :—

'*Table Holdout.*—Very small and light. It can be put under and removed from any table in less than half a minute. Works easily from either knee. It will bring three or more cards up into your hand and take back the discards as you hold your hands and cards in a natural position on top of the table.'

This 'contraption' is an extremely simple thing, its recommendation being that it accomplishes mechanically what the 'bug' requires manipulation to effect. It is

constructed on the same principle as the ordinary vest machine, and is fastened to the under side of the table-top by means of a spike, in a similar manner to the table reflector. The string which works the slide terminates, at the end which is pulled, in a hook having a sharp point. The machine being fixed under the table ready to commence operations, the pointed hook is thrust through the material of the trousers just above one knee. When the slide is required to come forward, the knee is dropped a little; and, upon raising the knee again, the slide is withdrawn by its spring, as in all similar arrangements.

By this time the reader will be in a position to understand the nature of the 'reflector on machine,' referred to in the last chapter, without needing to be wearied with further details of this particular kind.

Having thus glanced at all the principal varieties of the modern holdout, with one or two of the more ancient ones, it only remains to add a few general remarks to what has been said.

Each class of machine has its own peculiar advantages and disadvantages. Each sharp has his own peculiarities of taste and his own methods of working. Therefore, there is no one kind of appliance which appeals equally to all individuals. Some will prefer one machine; some another. That, of course, is the rule in the world generally. A great deal also depends upon the manners

and customs of the country in which the machine is to be used.

For instance, how many card-players are there in England who hold their cards in the manner represented in fig. 34? Very few, I take it. Yet it is a very good method of preventing others from seeing one's hand. Further, it is the correct way to hold the cards when using the Kepplinger sleeve-machine. The cards are placed

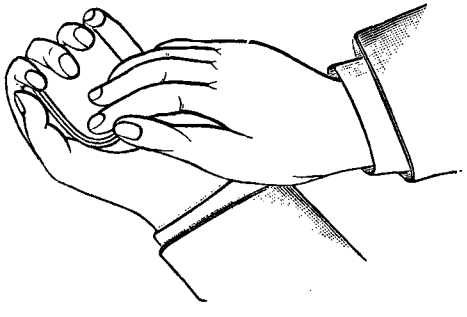

FIG. 34.—Poker player's method of holding cards.

flat in one hand, the fingers of the other are pressed upon them in the centre, whilst the thumb turns up one corner to allow of the indices being read. To adopt this method in England, however, would be to arouse suspicion at once, merely because it is unusual. Therefore the vest machine is the best for the English sharp; although no holdout can compare with the Kepplinger in a game of Poker in America.

Although most of these contrivances are simple in operation, the reader must not run away with the idea that their use entails no skill upon the part of the sharp who uses them. That would be far too blissful a state of affairs ever to be achieved in this weary world, where all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Certainly, they do not demand the dismal hours of solitary confinement with hard labour which have to be spent upon some of the manipulative devices and sleight-of-hand dodges; but still they require a certain amount of deftness, which can only be acquired by practice. The following instructions will represent the advice of an expert, given to a novice who proposed to try his hand with a machine at the game of Poker :—

'Practise at least three weeks or a month with the machine, to get it down fine [i.e. to gain facility of working, both of machine and operator]. Don't work the machine too much. [Not too often during the game.] In a big game [that is, where the stakes are high] three or four times in a night are enough. NEVER play it in a small game [because the amount that could be won would be incommensurate with the risk of detection]. Holding out one card will beat any square game [honest play] in the world. Two cards is very strong; but can easily be played on smart people. Three cards is too much to hold out on smart men, as a 'full' is too big to be held often without acting as an eye-opener.

Never, under any circumstances, hold out four or five. One card is enough, as you are really playing six cards to every one else's five. This card will make a 'straight' of a 'flush' sometimes; or, very often, will give you 'two pair' or 'three' of a kind. If you are very expert, you can play the machine on your own deal; but it looks better to do it on someone else's.'

Having digested these words of comfort and advice—precious jewels extracted from the crown of wisdom and experience—we may proceed on our way invigorated and refreshed by the consciousness of having acquired knowledge such as rarely falls to the lot of man to possess.

CHAPTER VI

MANIPULATION

MANY readers upon the occasion of their taking up this book for the first time will be under the impression, doubtless, that the most important revelations it contains will prove to be those connected with the manipulative devices employed by card-sharpers and others in cheating the simple-minded and unwary. But, whatever preconceptions upon the subject may have existed, the details of mere manipulation are far from being those of the most consequence to the sharp in the exercise of his profession. This, of course, must be understood to be simply a general statement which does not apply to particular cases. The low-class English sharp, for instance, relies almost entirely upon certain forms of sleight of hand to deceive the senses of his dupes. Again, there are some tricks and dodges which are practised by even the most high-class cheats. The rule is, however, that mere sleight of hand is to a great extent obsolete; at least, among those who seek to swindle really good card-players. The methods of legerdemain

are more the common property of the multitude than formerly, and this fact tends to operate very largely to the detriment of the sharp. With the legitimate *prestidigitateur* it is otherwise. It is true, some persons are in a position to form a better idea as to how his tricks are accomplished than was the case in years gone by; but even then, there remains the advantage that they are better able to appreciate his deftness and his ingenuity. Therefore, he is rather benefited than otherwise by the spread of this particular form of knowledge. It is the poor sharp who has suffered through the enlightenment of the public. His lines have fallen in rough places of late years; yet it can hardly be said that he has not proved himself more than equal to the occasion. When checkmated in one direction, he is generally capable of creating a diversion in his own favour in another.

In card games especially there is always a risk in resorting to manipulation nowadays. There is the ever-present possibility of some one among the cheat's antagonists having sufficient knowledge to detect him in his manipulation of the cards. He is haunted by the fear that sharp eyes are watching his every movement, and he knows full well that he can accomplish nothing in this way without some movement which a trained eye would instantly detect. Once detected in cheating, his reputation is gone. He can no longer hope to find dupes

among his former acquaintances. He must seek 'fresh fields and pastures new.' However precious reputation may be to an honest man, it is a thousand times more so to the sharp. Once his reputation is gone he has to depend upon chance custom; whereas he might otherwise have a nice little circle of regular clients, at whose expense he could live in ease and comfort.

As a professional sharp remarked to a young friend, to whom he was giving lessons in the art of cheating: 'The best gamblers [they don't call themselves sharps] play with fair cards only; and, by being wonderfully keen card-players, make their brains win, instead of cheating with the pack. They play in partnership (secret), and are invincible, as they know all the various swindles and so can protect themselves from being cheated. The most successful men are among this class, although nearly all of them can do the finest work with a pack of cards.

'The next best class are those who play marked cards well, many of them using cards that no one not acquainted with the work could find out in a lifetime. [Instance, the scroll-work on p. 51.] These men, if they can only get their own cards into a game, are sure to win.

'Then, after these come the class of "second dealers," "bottom dealers," and men who habitually do work with the pack to win. *These men always get caught in the long run.*'

Such, then, being the case as evidenced by the word of an expert, one may form some idea of the relative value of manipulation as compared with other methods in the hands of the card-sharper.

To deal thoroughly with this branch of our subject would require a text-book of sleight of hand, as nearly all the tricks of 'hanky-panky' could be made to serve the purposes of cheating. But since so many excellent treatises of that kind are readily accessible to the public, it would be superfluous to do more than give the reader a general idea of those methods which the sharp has made peculiarly his own. Even among those which are here represented, there are many devices which are rapidly becoming obsolete, and others of which it is very doubtful how far they are used at the present moment. In sharping, like everything else, 'the old order changeth, giving place to new.' However, the reader must judge for himself as to what devices would be likely to deceive him personally, and that will help him to an understanding of what would probably have the same effect upon others. Thus he will be able to arrive at a tolerably approximate estimate of the probabilities in connection with the use or disuse of any individual trick. The author, being too old a bird to be caught with any such chaff, is really not so competent to form an opinion upon the subject. In his case familiarity, if it has not bred contempt, has at least deadened the due appreciation of

the relative merits and advantages of the various trickeries. They all appear of the same tint against the background of past experience, each one possessing but little individuality of its own. With the reader, however, it is in all probability different. Assuming that he has merely a casual acquaintance with manual dexterity of this kind he will come fresh to the subject, and therefore to him the details will assume their proper relative proportions.

To begin, then, with the oldest and most simple manipulations, our first topic is that of the 'Bottom Deal.' This trick, simple as it is, is the very stronghold of the common English sharp. In whatever game he is playing, he seizes the opportunity afforded by picking up the cards preparatory to dealing to place certain cards which would form a good hand at the bottom of the pack, and in shuffling he takes good care not to disturb them. But there is still the 'cut' to be thought about. Well, we shall see later on how the effects of the cut are to be obviated. In the meantime, however, it is evident that if the cards were cut and piled in the ordinary manner, those cards which the sharp had so carefully preserved at the bottom would be brought to the centre. That would never answer his purpose; so, when the cut has been made, if the game is one which does not necessitate the dealing out of the entire pack, he simply takes up the bottom half of the pack, leaving the other on the table. Then, holding the cards as in fig. 35, he proceeds

to deal. From this point the trick, as its name suggests, consists of dealing the bottom cards, either to himself or, preferably, to a confederate, in place of the upper cards which should justly fall to that hand.

From the position in which the cards are held it will be seen that, as each card is dealt, the finger and thumb of the dealer's right hand fall respectively below and above the pack. It is, therefore, entirely optional whether

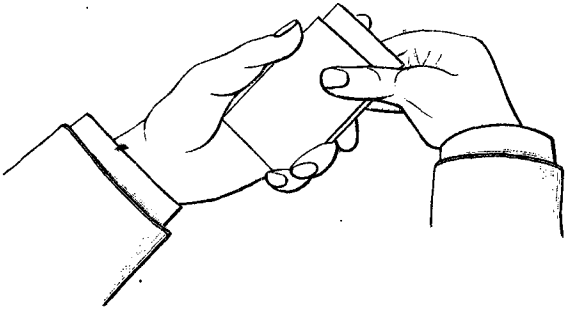

FIG. 35.—Bottom Deal.

he shall take the top card with his thumb, or the bottom one with his finger. When a card has to be dealt, then, to himself or to his confederate, as the case may be, it is the bottom one which is taken ; to the other players the top ones are dealt out. When quickly done, it is impossible to see whether the card comes from the top or the bottom, although the manner of holding and dealing the cards would imply that the bottom deal was being

resorted to : the cards which come from the bottom, being pulled upwards, appear to come from the top. It can always be detected, nevertheless, by the different sound made by a card when brought from the bottom. There is just a slight click, which is distinctly audible, and easily recognised. The reader should try it for himself, and note the effect referred to. After a few minutes' experience he would never afterwards be mistaken in deciding as to whether a card was dealt from the top or bottom of the pack. A sharp who uses the bottom deal rarely employs any other form of manipulation whatever.

We now pass on to the trick known as 'Dealing Seconds.' The trick is so named because it consists of dealing out the second card from the top instead of the top one. It is particularly useful in connection with marked cards, where of course the top card can be read, and very often the second one also.[1] The effect in this case is that the sharp can always retain the better of the two top cards for himself. Suppose, then, there are four players. The sharp, commencing to deal, notices that the top card is a knave, whilst the second is a three. He therefore deals the second card to the player immediately to his left. It may then appear that the second card now is a king ; and, consequently, the sharp deals the top card to the second hand, leaving the

[1] See fig. 7.

king on top. If the card which is now second in the pack is lower than the king, the third player receives that card ; but if the second should prove to be an ace, the king goes to the third player, and the ace to the sharp himself. It may happen, however, that the sharp, having dealt round to the three players in this manner, finds that the second of the remaining cards is of more value to him than the first. In that case, of course, he would deal himself the second. Thus it is seen that the sharp has really had a choice of five cards on one round of the deal ; and the larger the number of players, the greater his choice, although he may at times have to choose between two cards which would answer his purpose equally well. If he is thus compelled to give away a good card he should dispose of it where it is likely to do him least harm, if he can contrive to do so. Besides marked cards, there are other methods of discovering the value of the top card and, consequently, the advisability of dealing seconds, as we shall see presently.

The trick of dealing the second card is very easily learned. Take a pack of cards in your left hand, in the manner usually adopted in dealing, with the thumb lying across the middle of the pack. Then with the thumb advance the two top cards slightly to the right. This being done, it will be found that these two cards can be taken between the thumb and middle finger. With the second held by the tip of the middle finger,

advance the top card a little further to the right. The cards will now be in a position frequently adopted in dealing, the top card being sufficiently forward to be grasped by the right finger and thumb. So far, there is nothing unusual in the operations; but this is where the trick comes in. If the middle finger of the hand holding the cards is advanced, the second card, resting upon its tip, will be advanced also; and if at the same time the thumb is drawn back, the top card is withdrawn with it. It is now the second card which is the more advanced of the two, and consequently the card which would be taken by the right hand in dealing. In fact, the two cards can be rubbed together by the finger and thumb, alternately advancing and receding. If the second card is to be dealt, then it is pushed forward and the top one is drawn back, the movement being masked by a slight dropping of the arm towards the operator. Of course the change in the position of the cards is not made until the instant the right hand reaches the pack to take the card. Thus the entire operation appears to consist of one movement only. An expert 'second-dealer' will place a known card on top of the pack and deal the whole of the other cards from beneath it, leaving that card in his hands at the finish; and this without any manipulation being visible to any but the sharpest vision.

The utility of the second-dealing method of pro-

cedure, it is evident, depends greatly upon the fact of having a knowledge of the top card. With marked cards the acquiring of this knowledge can present no difficulty, and even with genuine ones the difficulty is by no means insuperable. All that is necessary is to reach over to the left, keeping the cards in front of one, with the top card drawn off a little to one side, so as to have the index in the corner visible from below, and a sly peep will do the trick. There are innumerable excuses available to account for the reaching over, as we have already seen in the case of the cuff holdout. Given the fact that there is something to the left of the operator which must be reached with the right hand, the rest is easy. The act of leaning to one side effectually covers the slight tilting of the left hand which enables the under side of the cards to be seen. There used to be an old American colonel (the numerical strength of officers in the American army must have been extraordinary at some time or another) at one of the best London clubs who was very partial to the use of this trick. He would lay his cigar upon the table, well over to his left, and then, bending down to get it, he would note both top and bottom cards, in the manner described.

Simple as this dodge may be, it is unquestionably of great service at times. Take, for instance, the case of the dealer at Poker. After he has dealt the cards, but before giving off the draft, he leans over to pick up his hand, and in so doing sees the 'size' of the top card of the

'deck.' Upon inspecting his hand, he can tell whether the top card will be of use to him or not. If it is, he can easily hold it back until he can take it for himself; if not, he very generously lets someone else have it.

For the benefit of those who may not know the game of Poker, and in England there are many who do not, I may illustrate the great utility of knowing the top and bottom cards by a reference to the results attainable by such means in the familiar game of Nap. Suppose that you are playing a single-handed game, and it is your turn to deal. You note the top and bottom cards. If they happen to be decent ones, both of the same suit, you hold back the top card, and give your opponent the second. The top one then comes to you. You now give your opponent the card next in order, and deal the bottom one to yourself. The rest of the cards may be left to chance, until the five are dealt out to each hand. The consequence of this manœuvre is as follows. You are sure of having two good cards of one suit, and it is about an even chance that among the other three will be another of the same kind. Therefore, you are pretty certain of a long suit to lead from. Your chances, therefore, are a long way better than your opponent's. If, however, on the other hand, you find that the top and bottom cards are small ones, and of different suits, you may make your opponent a present of them. They may of course prove useful to him; but the chances are that they do not. But, whatever happens, you

know the value of two cards out of his five ; a fact which may have considerable influence upon the result of the hand, as all 'Nappists' will admit. Necessarily there is nothing of real certainty about this achievement ; but, still, the player who knows the top and bottom cards, even though he is not skilful enough to dispose of them to the best advantage, gathers in a goodly proportion of the chances of the game which do not belong to him by right.

We now come to the consideration of methods employed by the sharp in manipulating the cards to his own advantage during the process of shuffling, and of preventing the overthrow of his plans by the disarrangement introduced into the result of his efforts in the fact of the cards having to be cut by an opponent. However carefully he may contrive to arrange the order of the cards, the cut would obviously upset his calculations. Therefore, in addition to some method of placing the cards in order, he must also have a ready means of rendering the cut inoperative. We have already seen how the bottom-dealer dodges it ; and now we will look into one or two other systems, most of them equally simple, and all of them equally effective.

We will suppose for the moment that the cards have been arranged in, or at any rate not disarranged by, the shuffle. The sharp lays the pack upon the table ; his opponent lifts up the top half and lays it down near

the bottom half. In the natural course of things the sharp should now take up the bottom half, place it upon the top half that was, close the cards together, and commence to deal. If this were done, the cards which he required to have on top would now be in the middle of the pack, and all the trouble he had devoted to their disposition would be wasted. So he is compelled to adopt some means of restoring the cards to their former position. In accomplishing this there are several courses open to him. The simplest and most barefaced method, and yet one which will escape detection nine times out of ten, is the following. The cards having been cut, and the two halves of the pack having been placed side by side in the usual manner, the sharp picks up the bottom half with the right hand, as though he were about to place it upon the other ; but instead of so doing, he deliberately puts it into his left hand. Then picking up the top half, he adds it to the other, in the position it originally occupied. There is absolutely nothing in this but impudence, and yet the dodge will nearly always pass muster. Try it the next time you are playing cards, and you will find that nobody will notice it if it is done with apparent carelessness. Even though someone did perceive that the cards were in the same order as formerly, the sharp could always apologise for his inadvertence and suffer them to be cut again.

Another very simple method is to cross the hands,

picking up the right half of the pack with the left hand, and the left half with the right hand. Then uncrossing the hands, the two halves are put together in their former order. The crossing of the hands tends to confuse the mind of an onlooker, so that he really does not know which hand contains the half that should be placed on top.

The reader must distinctly understand that such open and palpable deceptions as these two last would only be practised by the very lowest class of sharps. A good man would scorn the action.[1] With regard to the methods resorted to at any time very much depends upon the class of sharp and the intelligence of the company in which he happens to find himself. The employment of simple trickeries like these in a card party of 'smart' players could only be attended with modified success, very modified indeed. If the players were smart, the sharp would smart. This joke is not copyright, but it is logical nevertheless.

The 'pass,' which is the essence of so many card-tricks, is another means of restoring the order of the cards after they have been cut. Since it is explained in every book on conjuring, however, we will only just glance at it. For a fuller description the reader may be referred to Professor Hoffman's admirable treatises.

[1] The terms 'good man' and 'cunning cheat' must here be considered as synonymous.

In making the pass the two halves of the pack are picked up in the order they should rightly assume after being cut, care being taken however that there is a slight division maintained between them. For instance, the bottom half is placed upon the top one as it lies upon the table perfectly level sideways, but projecting over one end about a quarter of an inch. The pack is now put into the left hand, and in the act of levelling up the two halves the little finger s inserted between them. Meanwhile the sharp engages the other players in an animated conversation. Then just before dealing, apparently with the object of again levelling the cards, he covers the pack with his right hand. In an instant the cards appear to pass through one another, and the half which was uppermost before cutting is in that position now. The action is simply this. The little finger of the left hand being between the two halves of the pack, that which is above for the moment is held by the little finger and the other three. The lower half is gripped by the thumb and fingers of the right hand. Then by slightly opening the left hand and closing the right, the two halves are drawn asunder. Immediately reversing the motion the two halves come together again with their respective positions reversed. The movement necessary to effect this operation is covered by a slight dropping of the hands at the critical moment. This is called the 'double-handed pass,' as both hands are used to effect it.

There are also various single-handed passes available to the expert, but these are more difficult to accomplish neatly, and cannot be so readily disguised. If used at all they are accompanied by a movement of the hand from the operator, as in pointing at something or in shaking the wrist clear of the cuff to give freedom of arm during dealing. The simplest of these passes is made by holding the cards between the thumb and the last three fingers of the left hand, a slight division between the two halves of the pack being maintained at the thumb side. The lower half is now dropped into the palm, and with the forefinger it is turned up towards the thumb. The upper half is now released and allowed to fall upon the fingers which are extended for its reception. Finally, the lower half is dropped upon the upper one and the original order is restored. Much practice, of course, is required to perform this operation with ease and despatch.

Another form of pass may be accomplished in putting the cards from the right hand into the left. The pack is held in the right hand, with the upper half slightly advanced, and the lower nipped in the thumb-joint. The left hand, instead of taking the whole pack, merely takes the upper half. The right, in levelling the cards, deposits the lower half upon the upper.

It must be forcibly impressed upon the reader that under no circumstances whatever is it possible to make the pass without that device being detected by an expert

who is looking for it. Even half a glance at the operator's movements would arouse suspicions which could not be easily allayed. It is therefore a dangerous proceeding at any time for a sharp to indulge in. It is possible that through inattention the expert may not actually see the pass made ; but the accompanying movements are sufficient indication of what is going on to anyone who 'knows his way about.' In days gone by, the pass was a power in the hands of the sharp ; but now, alas, it is only of occasional use, and the risk it involves is very, very great.

Another method of dodging the cut is to take the half of the pack which should finally be on the top, but which the sharp desires to be underneath, holding it by the thumb and three last fingers of the right hand, with the forefinger bent, and its back resting upon the back of the top card. The cards, being thus removed from the table, are now held entirely by the forefinger and the other three, the thumb being taken away. The second half of the pack is now taken up between the thumb and forefinger; at the same instant, the other cards being slipped underneath instead of on top as they should be. Skilfully and quickly done, this plan is very deceptive, as such things go.

Rather than resort to any method of restoring the order of the cards after they have been cut, it is far preferable for the sharp to so arrange matters, if possible,

that the act of cutting should bring those cards uppermost which are required to be at the top. In a single-handed game, by keeping strict watch upon the direction of his opponent's gaze, he may be enabled to find an opportunity of making the pass; but in a round game, someone is sure to be looking at the cards, and the pass becomes much too risky to be attempted. Therefore, in a case of this kind, the sharp will endeavour to manipulate the cards in such a way that the cut merely serves the purpose of removing certain cards, which are placed above those he needs, uppermost.

The commonest plan in use for this purpose is the device known as the 'Bridge.' This architectural contrivance consists of either bending the two halves of the pack in opposite directions, or bending one half, and leaving the other straight (fig. 36). The trick derives its name from the curvature thus produced.[1] In the illustration, the cards which are required to be on top are the straight ones now lying underneath. An unsuspicious player, being called upon to cut the pack, will undoubtedly lift off the bent half, owing to the division existing between it and the other. Then there is no need of the pass, or anything of the kind. The sharp has 'forced the cut.' Considering how well-known the bridge is, it is extraordinary how often it is successful.

[1] The curve of the upper cards, as shown in the figure, is much exaggerated. It is, really, very slight.

The fact is, the players are not looking for it; they assume that they are playing with honest men, and upon that assumption the sharp in great measure relies.

The bridge is specially useful in cases where a confederate is available to cut the cards. Then the bridge need not be so much arched. The very slightest bend is sufficient, as the 'confed.' will be careful to cut at the right place. The 'end-bridge' is a variety we shall have to touch upon later on, and other dodges for

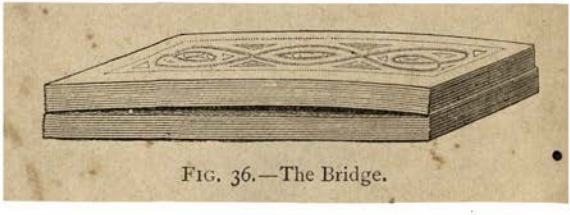

FIG. 36.—The Bridge.

attaining the same end as this one will be described in the chapter on 'Prepared Cards.'

Working backwards, then, from the end to the means, we arrive by a natural transition to the methods of manipulation employed in securing an advantageous disposition of the cards. Among these, a prominent place is occupied by what are known as 'false shuffles.' These are of three kinds. The first is the shuffle which leaves undisturbed the previous arrangement of the entire pack. The second is that which affects only part of the pack, allowing the rest to retain its original order. The third is the variety which effects the systematic disposi-

tion of the cards in a manner which will bring good hands to the sharp and his accomplices, if such there be, or at any rate either to the sharp himself or to an accomplice.

By way of familiarising the reader with these processes, we will just glance through the older forms of all three kinds. It must be distinctly borne in mind, however, that the modern methods of shuffling have rendered most of these obsolete. They have been replaced by improved manipulations, as we shall see later.

Of the first kind of these shuffles there is a great variety. They are simply manipulations which appear to be shuffles, but in reality are not so. We will investigate one of them. The pack is taken in two halves, one of which is held in each hand. From the right hand half about half a dozen cards are pushed off and placed *beneath* those in the left hand. Then, from the left hand, three cards say are pushed off and placed beneath those in the right hand. This process is continued, always putting more cards from right to left than *vice versa*, until the whole pack appears to have been shuffled into the left hand. This looks exactly like a genuine shuffle. In fact, most persons upon having it explained to them will say that the cards really *are* shuffled, but it is not so. The effect produced is that of a simple cut. If the bridge is made before commencing,

the process can be continued until the top card has resumed its former place. Then it will be found that there has been absolutely no disarrangement of the cards whatever.

This shuffle is particularly useful at the beginning of a game when the sharp contrives to get the deal, or upon the introduction of a fresh pack of cards. Gamblers are superstitious as a rule, and when their 'luck is out,' which is generally the case when they happen to be playing with a sharp, they will sometimes seek to improve it by changing the cards. Now, even a new pack can be opened for the purpose of arranging the contents, and sealed up again so neatly that there is no evidence of its ever having been tampered with. Then, supposing the sharp to be a member of a club, the person who purchases the club cards may be a confederate, and thus the cards which are apparently fresh from the maker may have been falsified in any desired manner.[1] Whatever method may have been adopted to arrange the pack, the foregoing shuffle will not disturb it. The cut is rendered inefficient by either of the methods given, and all is happiness and prosperity.

The second form of false shuffle is quite as easy to accomplish as the first. All that is necessary is to take care that the part of the pack which is required to be kept intact should not be disturbed. The rest of the

[1] See Chapter VII.—'Collusion and Conspiracy,' p. 173 *et seq.*

cards may be shuffled to one's heart's content. The sharp, having noted certain cards among those which have been played that would be of service to him in some way or another, in picking them up contrives to place them all together at the top or bottom of the pack. Then in shuffling he avoids all interference with those cards. A good plan is to put the cards on top and lay the pack upon the table. Then with the right hand lift up the top cards, and, with the left, cut the remainder in two and shuffle one portion into the other. This will pass for a genuine shuffle almost anywhere. Selected cards, placed above or below the pack, are called 'top-stock' or 'bottom-stock,' as the case may be. They are useful for a variety of purposes, as will be readily understood. The effect of the holdout when used in the game of Poker, as described in the last chapter, is to work the top-stock for draught. The shuffle just dealt with would work the top-stock for deal.

The last of the three kinds of false shuffles enumerated is of course the most generally useful in almost any game. Take whist for example. How pleasant would it be to be able to deal oneself, or one's partner, a hand containing nearly all the trumps. Well, that is a thing which is quite possible of accomplishment and by no means difficult. The cards are simply arranged during the shuffle. It is what is called 'putting up' a hand, and this is how it is done.

As the tricks are played in the previous hand you notice those which contain a preponderance of the best cards of one suit, say diamonds. You keep an eye particularly upon the four tricks which would make the best hand, viz., those which contain the highest cards. It is your turn to deal. You pick up the tricks as they lie upon the table or are passed to you, keeping those you require slightly separate from the rest as you gather them up, and finally place them at the bottom of the pack, with the little finger of your right hand inserted between them and the cards which are above. You now proceed to shuffle. The first operation is to put all the cards above your little finger into the right hand. Thus you hold the cards you require in your left hand, but there are sixteen of them, and you only want thirteen. Therefore you push off three of them into the right hand. Now you are ready to make your final arrangements. With the thumb of your left hand slip off one card from that hand on to those in the right. Then with the thumb of your right hand slip that card together with the three immediately below it *under* the cards in the left. Again you slip one from the left on top of those in the right, and again place that card with the three next to it under the left hand cards.

This action is repeated until only three cards remain in the right hand. Arriving at this point care must be observed. You have of course borne in mind the

necessity of having the bottom card, which will be the trump, of the same suit as that which preponderates in the number selected, and have arranged matters accordingly. Now, with only three cards in the right hand, there remain two of the selected cards above those in the left which have not been handled. The second of these two will be the one required for the trump card, in this case a diamond. Therefore you put the first one on top of the three remaining in the right, and the second one below them. Then the whole five are put at the bottom of the pack and the shuffle is complete. You evade the cut by whichever method suits your opportunities best, and upon dealing, all the selected cards fall to yourself.

The above is a shuffle which is easily acquired, and when done neatly and quickly, the effect is very good. It looks exactly like a genuine shuffle. The only difficult part of the manipulation is placing the four cards from right to left. There is not much time to count them. With a little practice however, the operator can *feel* that the right number of cards go into the other hand. The best practice is to pick out all the cards of one suit, and shuffle them into the others in the manner described. Then when the cards are dealt out, it will be seen at once whether the shuffle has been correctly performed or not. The passing of the cards from side to side must be quickly done, and without pausing between the movements, if the trick is to escape detection.

This one instance will serve to give the reader the basis of all the other shuffles in which the cards are arranged. They all consist in the main principle of placing certain cards all together in some convenient position in the pack, and then arranging them with a proper number of indifferent cards between each one and the next. The nature of the game of course decides the manner of their arrangement.

The reader may very possibly find some difficulty in quite grasping the details of these explanations, but if he will take a pack of cards and follow the instructions step by step they will all become clear. If these older forms of shuffling are thoroughly understood, it will be a great help towards arriving at the full significance of the more modern manipulations which are about to be described.

At the present day the foregoing trickeries would be inadmissible owing to the fact that only the most juvenile card players would ever use the form of shuffles they involve. No *player* would ever think of taking the two halves of the pack, one in either hand, when about to shuffle. That style of thing is quite out of date. Indeed in a smart game the dealer would not be even allowed to raise the cards from the table when shuffling, although in the ordinary way they are more often than not simply shuffled from one hand into the other.

The principal shuffles of modern times are three in number :—

1. The 'Over-hand Shuffle.'
2. The 'Riffle' or 'Butt-in Shuffle.'
3. The 'Écarté Shuffle.'

The over-hand shuffle is that in which the cards are taken in the left hand and shuffled, a few at a time, into the right. It is familiar to all, and requires no more than the mere mention of it to recall it to the reader's mind.

The riffle, or butt-in, as it is called in America, is the shuffle in which the pack is laid upon the table, the top half is taken off with the right hand and laid near it. The fingers of either hand then press upon the cards of the respective halves of the pack, whilst the thumbs 'riffle' or bend up the corners of the cards, allowing them to spring down, one or two at a time, from right to left alternately, those of one side falling between those of the other. Finally the cards are levelled up and the shuffle is complete.

The écarté shuffle is one in which the cards are laid on the table with one side of the pack facing the operator. The top half of the pack, or rather less, is taken off with the right hand and shuffled into the remainder of the cards held by the left as they lie upon the table.

In those cases where the dealer is not allowed to shuffle the cards in his hands, the riffle or the écarté shuffle is used. A variety of the riffle called the French shuffle is sometimes adopted in which a half of the pack is taken in either hand, the two halves resting upon the

table at one end and inclined towards each other, a few cards at a time being allowed to fall from either side alternately.

With these higher class shuffles then, it is evident that more improved methods of manipulation must be adopted to render them amenable to the purposes of cheating. We have therefore to examine the means employed by the sharp (1) to keep intact a pre-arrangement of the cards, (2) to leave undisturbed a certain portion of the pack which has been 'put up' or 'stocked,' and (3) to put up hands or arrange the cards to suit his own purposes. The corollary to these manipulations is necessarily the means of nullifying the effect of the cut which follows as an inevitable consequence upon the shuffle; except, of course, in those cases where a player is content to 'knock' instead of cutting. This 'knock' is an American institution, and consists of merely rapping the top of the pack with the knuckles. It signifies that the player does not wish to cut, and is frequently practised by the sharp's accomplice, when he has one, to avoid disturbing the order of the cards.

To retain the original order or pre-arrangement of a whole pack, the riffle is the shuffle that is generally used; the modification referred to in the last paragraph but one being the most convenient form for the purpose. The top half of the pack being taken in the right hand, and those of the bottom half in the left, the cards are

riffled together upon the table. If the pack were levelled up, the shuffle would of course be effectual; but it is in the act of levelling that the trickery is introduced. As the cards rest in front of the operator, those of one side alternating with those of the other, they are covered by his hands, the thumbs being towards him, the three first fingers of each hand on the opposite side of the pack, and the little fingers pressing upon the ends of the right and left halves respectively. In this way the cards are just straightened merely, but not closed up. A turn of the hands, from the little fingers outwards, throws the two packets of cards at an angle one to the other, the thumbs now resting upon the corners nearest the operator. The little fingers are then closed in towards the thumbs. This has the effect of pushing the cards of each packet diagonally across those of the other. Those of the right half pass against the thumb of the left hand, whilst those of the left half pass in a similar manner across the right thumb. Thus the cards simply pass from either hand into the other. The top half of the pack is now held by the fingers and thumb of the *left* hand and *vice versa*. The two packets are now quickly separated, and that in the left hand is placed above that in the right. The whole of the cards are therefore in their original positions, although they appear to have been perfectly shuffled. The passing of the cards across is to give the appearance of closing them together;

whereas they really pass right through into the opposite hands. Quickly done, this shuffle is most deceptive, but the whole operation should not occupy more than a couple of seconds. It can always be detected by one who knows it, on account of the necessity of turning the two halves at an angle; otherwise it is perfect. It cannot be very successfully performed with a full pack, but with an écarté pack of 32 cards it is very simple.

To allow a certain number of cards to remain undisturbed is a comparatively simple matter in any shuffle. It is only necessary to see that they *are* undisturbed. In the over-hand shuffle they may be placed either at the top or bottom of the pack, passing them all together from the left hand into the right. When they are at the top, the approved method is to slip off at once, into the right hand, as many of the top cards as may be necessary to insure that the whole of the selected cards are together. This packet is held by pressing the cards endwise between the forefinger and the root of the thumb. The remaining cards are then shuffled *on to the forefinger*, thus maintaining a slight division above those which have been put up. The final movement of the shuffle is to part the pack at this division, and return the top cards to their original position.

In the riffle shuffle it is quite as easy to retain the position of any cards which may require to be kept in

view. If they are at the bottom of the pack, they are simply riffled down upon the table before any others are allowed to fall, and the rest of the cards are shuffled above them. If they are at the top, they are held back until all the other cards have fallen. In either case, the cards of one half are simply let down sooner or more slowly than those of the other, according to whether the stocked cards are at the top or the bottom.

In the écarté shuffle, the proceedings are a little more complex. It would never do to coolly ignore a certain portion of the pack in shuffling; therefore the observers have to be thrown off the scent. This is done by means of the manipulation known as 'the French card-sharper's shuffle,' which is accomplished in the following manner. The pack lies upon the table before the operator, with the stocked cards on top. With the thumb and *second* finger of the right hand, he seizes a sufficient number of the top cards to be sure of having the selected ones all together, and lifts them up, at the same time moving his hand away from him so as to leave the pack unobstructed by the cards just raised. Then with the thumb and *first* finger of the left hand, he takes up a similar packet of cards from the pack, leaving probably about a third of the pack still remaining on the table. Now comes the trick. The right hand packet is placed under the cards just raised by the left thumb and forefinger, and is immediately gripped by the *middle* finger and

thumb of that hand. Meanwhile, the left-hand packet is taken by the right thumb and forefinger, and moved aside. The two packets have thus changed hands, the top cards being now in the left. In this position they are held by the left finger and thumb, whilst the right hand shuffles the second packet into the cards remaining on the table. This process is gone through several times, and the cards appear to be thoroughly well shuffled. Nevertheless, it is evident that the top cards have remained intact throughout.

Before passing on to the third form of false shuffle, by means of which cards are put up or stocked, it is necessary at this point to refer to the device known as the 'end-bridge,' a thing which is commonly used at the present time to force the cut at a given point in the pack. Any false shuffle is manifestly useless without some resource of this kind. As the reader is doubtless aware, it is a common practice among card players, at the conclusion of the shuffle and before giving the pack to be cut, to part it at about the middle and place the lower half above the upper. This seems to have become quite the orthodox termination of any shuffle; just a final cut as it were to finish. It is in this final cut that the end-bridge is generally made. We will suppose that the stocked cards are at the top of the pack. The top half is taken by the thumb and second finger of the right hand and drawn off; the cards being held near the

corners at one end, the forefinger meanwhile resting upon them between the second finger and thumb. In the act of drawing off the cards they are pressed between the thumb and finger, so as to bend them slightly concave at the back between the corners by which they are held. The bottom half of the pack is then placed above the upper one, the curvature of which produces a slight division between the two halves at one end. The other end not having been tampered with it can be turned towards the players with impunity. The cards being levelled, they are laid on the table in such a position that the player who is to cut will take them by the ends; and it is almost certain that he will cut at the bridge.

By way of example, then, the French card-sharper's shuffle in its entirety would consist of the following movements. (1) The top cards are lifted by the right hand, and the second packet raised by the left. (2) The top packet is placed under the second one, and gripped by the left hand. (3) The right hand seizes the second packet, and takes it from above the top one, which remains held by the left thumb and finger. (4) The second packet is shuffled into the cards remaining on the table, and the top packet is dropped upon the whole. (5) The pack is parted by drawing off the upper half with the thumb and second finger of the right hand; at the same moment the bridge is made, the upper half is put under the lower, and the cards are given to be cut.

Thus, both the shuffle and the bridge are included in one complete operation.

We now come to the modern methods of 'stocking,' or 'putting-up' hands. This, of course, includes the third form of false shuffle. The simplest method of stocking is accomplished in the act of picking up the cards from the table preparatory to shuffling, and is very useful in a game such as Nap. The player who is about to deal notes among the cards lying upon the table those which would provide him with a good hand. With each hand he seizes one of them and immediately after takes up as many indifferent cards as there are players besides himself. He has then two cards 'put up.' Again he picks up two more good cards in the same way, and follows up with the proper number of indifferent ones, as before. He has now four cards out of the five he requires. With one hand therefore he picks up the remaining card, with three others, and puts all the cards thus taken up into one hand. The rest of the pack may be picked up anyhow, care being taken to keep the arranged cards on top. Then comes the shuffle. The first thing to be done is to put on the top of the selected card, which is uppermost, a similar number of indifferent cards to that which is between each of the selected ones, viz., as many as there are players besides himself. Thus the cards he wants will come to him on the deal. The rest of the shuffle is immaterial, so long

as the 'stock' is not interfered with. The end-bridge may be worked for the cut, and all being well, he will have the hand he prepared for himself. Some men can do this picking-up with incredible rapidity and without exciting the least suspicion on the part of their opponents.

Where the over-hand shuffle is used, the best way of putting up a hand is by means of the process which is called 'milking-down.' This is a manipulation which is both simple and effective. The cards required to be put up are placed all together at the bottom of the pack, which is then taken endways between the thumb and fingers of the left hand ready for shuffling, and the 'milking' commences. We will suppose the game to be Nap, and that three are playing. The dealer having put the selected cards at the bottom in the course of gathering the pack together, prepares to perform the over-hand shuffle as above indicated. With the thumb of his right hand he takes off one card from the top of the pack, whilst at the same moment and in the same movement the middle finger draws off one of the selected cards from the bottom. At this point then he has two cards in his right hand; one of those he has chosen, and an indifferent one from the top of the pack above it. But there are three players, so he must have two cards between each of his own and the next, therefore he draws off another from the top, over the two he already has in the right hand. Again he draws off together a card from the

top and bottom, and over these places another from the top. This is repeated until all the hand is put up, and then the remainder of the pack is shuffled on to his fore-finger in the manner previously described in connection with the over-hand shuffle. The stock is brought to the top, the pack is parted, the bridge made, and the cards are given to be cut.

Milking-down was originally used by Faro-dealers for the purpose of putting up the high and low cards alternately. The high ones being put all together at the top of the pack, for instance, and the low ones at the bottom, they were drawn down in pairs with great rapidity and thus alternated. Nowadays, however, the process is used for putting up hands for most games.

It is in connection with the riffle that the most skilful putting-up is accomplished, but much practice and experience are required to enable the manipulation to be performed with certainty. In theory, however, the process is simple. It consists of riffling between the selected cards the proper number of indifferent ones. Suppose that in a game of Nap the required cards have been put at the top of the pack. The cards are divided and riffled, taking care that none are allowed to go between the selected ones except the first and second, which must have the proper number between them. If there are three players, this number will, of course, be two. All that is necessary to effect this is to hold up the top

card with one thumb, and the last two cards of the other half with the other thumb. The two cards are allowed to fall upon the second of the selected cards, and the top one is dropped over them. It is with the second and following riffles, however, that the difficulty comes in. In the second riffle, four cards have to be held up and two dropped under them. In the third riffle, seven cards have to be held up, and in the fourth, ten. The fifth riffle merely puts two cards above the top selected card, and the shuffle is complete. The great difficulty is to know that the right number of cards is held up each time, and that the right number is put between them. It seems almost impossible that it can be done with certainty, but there are plenty of sharps who can do it readily enough without any mistake whatever. In fact, some are so skilful with this shuffle that they can find any cards they please by looking at the turned-up corners, and place them in any position they please within the pack.

In the game of Poker, when the pack has been stocked for draft, either at the top or the bottom, after the cut the sharp will place the two halves together in the proper manner, but leaving a little break between them. Thus he is enabled to know when the stocked cards are being given off and who has them. Or he may manage to hold back any that would be of use to him. If the cards are held inclined slightly upwards, he may

frequently be enabled to draw back the top card as in the 'second-deal,' and give off the next ones.

There is a single-handed pass sometimes used to bring the stock to the top, which is performed under cover of the right arm whilst reaching to the left. The cards are held upon a level with the table-top, and as the arm passes over them, those which are above the stock are pressed with the fingers of the left hand against the right elbow. Thus they are held for the moment whilst the others are drawn from beneath, and as the right arm returns, the stocked cards are brought to the top. In this way the entire operation is performed under cover of the arm, and is therefore undiscernible.

Where a confederate is available to cut the pack, there is a form of false cut which appears to pass muster in America pretty well. It consists of merely grasping the pack in both hands, lifting it off the table, and pulling it apart, so to speak. The half which comes from the bottom is drawn upwards, thus appearing to come from the top, in the same manner as the cards in the bottom-deal. At the same time, the top half is drawn downwards, appearing to come from the bottom. Then, when the two halves are put together in their original position, it looks as though the lower half had been put upon the upper. Quickly done, this ruse is fairly successful.

Another form of false cut is somewhat similar in effect to the French card-sharper's shuffle, and is used to retain

a 'top stock' in its place. A third of the pack, or thereabouts, is taken off with the right hand, and the remainder is cut in two with the left. The top cards are now placed upon those which remain on the table, the second lot are thrown down beside them, and upon these the other two packets are placed as one, bringing the top cards into their original position. Thus, whilst the pack is really cut into three, the only effect of the cut is to bring the bottom cards into the middle ; a result which is of no consequence where only a top stock is concerned.

We may conclude the present chapter with a description of the system of cheating known as 'Counting-down.' This is a method which is not by any means so familiar to the masses as those with which we have just been dealing. It is one of those devices which seem to lie within the borderland between honesty and dishonesty ; although, when one understands its real nature, there is no question as to the fact that it really *is* cheating, and nothing else. It is the most scientific mode of swindling, in games where only a few cards constitute a hand, that has ever been devised, and it is so good that it almost defies detection, even at the hands of an expert. It is just that one word 'almost,' however, which qualifies its absolute perfection. There is always some weak point in a trick, however good.

Counting down is one of those operations which

depend more on memory than sleight of hand. It requires long practice and much skill, but the skill is rather mental than manipulative. It is necessary that the sharp who practises it should be able to memorise instantly as many cards as possible. Comparatively few persons can remember more than five cards at a glance. Not one in a thousand can remember ten. There are some, however, who can remember the order of a whole pack of fifty-two cards, after seeing them dealt out rather slowly. Needless to say there are not many individuals of the latter class. All, however, use some system of artificial memory. Without something of the kind, counting-down would be impracticable.

The object of this system, of course, is to enable the sharp to know the sequence of a certain number of cards which are to be introduced into the play, and thus to be certain of their value, and also of the hands in which they are to be found. The possession of this knowledge is of the utmost importance sometimes.

As a readily understood and familiar example, let us suppose that the sharp is engaged in a single-handed game of Nap, and that he can remember twelve cards, together with the order in which they occur. His first duty will be to note the manner in which his opponent usually cuts, whether near the middle of the pack, near the top or the bottom. Most people have some peculiarity in this way which may be relied on. Suppose then

the sharp finds that the other man's cut is generally pretty well in the centre. When it is his turn to deal, in the act of shuffling he will place twelve cards in rapid succession at the bottom of the pack, at the same time holding the pack so that the faces of the cards are visible. He notes these twelve cards, and the order in which they occur. At the conclusion of the shuffle he leaves just so many cards over them as he thinks the other will take off in the cut; consequently, after cutting, those cards will be at the top or nearly so. If the sharp is fortunate the cut will come into the first one or two of them, and then when the cards are dealt, he knows by looking at his own hand precisely what cards his opponent holds. If his own hand will allow him to 'go more' than his opponent feels inclined to risk, he will do so, if not he allows his opponent to play. In either case he knows perfectly well what the result of the hand will be before a single card is put down. Of course if the case should be that he is playing against an unmistakable 'Nap' hand, and that he has no cards the skilful playing of which will prevent the other man from winning, he is bound to accept the inevitable. But it is obvious that the advantages he enjoys, compared with his antagonist, are enormous.

With a sharp who works the bottom-deal, the memorising of five cards only is sufficient. He notes the five cards and leaves them at the bottom of the pack which is given to be cut. After the cutting, he picks up the

bottom half of the pack, leaving the other upon the table. If the five cards at the bottom are good ones he deals them to himself, but if, on the contrary, they are little ones, which would make a bad hand, he deals them to his opponent. He will always let the opponent have them unless they are exceptionally good, because it is worth more than half the game to know what cards one has to contend with.

It is in the game of 'Poker,' however, that counting-down is of the greatest assistance. The cards are dealt round five to each player, and we will suppose it is the sharp's turn to deal next. He throws his hand, face downwards, on the table, and puts the rest of the pack on top of it. He therefore knows the five bottom cards of the pack, having memorised his hand. Even though some of the other players may understand counting-down, no one will suspect that any trickery is in progress, as the whole proceeding is quite usual and perfectly natural.

Having the whole of the cards in a heap in front of him, the sharp now takes them up to straighten or level them, somewhat ostentatiously keeping their faces turned well away from him, so that he cannot see a single card. He does not overdo this appearance of honesty however. That would be almost as fatal as an appearance of cheating.

The cards being straightened, the shuffle has now to be accomplished. In this case it will be one of the second,

or partial order. The sharp takes good care, in riffling down or what not, to leave undisturbed the five cards he has memorised, and finally to have them in such a position within the pack, that the cut and deal will leave them at the top. His object, of course, is to have the choice of those five cards in the draft. If he has been fortunate in his manipulation, the card which comes to him on the last round of the deal will be one of those five. In that case he knows the value of the two or three top cards, and looking at his hand he can tell whether either of them will be of use to him when it comes to his turn to draw. If so, in giving off the draft to the other players, he may, if opportunity serves, hold back the card or cards he requires. Then the other hands being complete, he can throw away a corresponding number of indifferent cards from his hand and take the selected ones for himself. Generally speaking, this method will enable him to retain and utilise a card which, otherwise, he would have thrown away as being useless, and very often enable him to make 'two pair.'

It is manifest that however skilfully this may be done, there is a strong element of uncertainty attaching to the result. The player who cuts the pack may not divide it in the right place by a card or two, and therefore it might happen that the whole of the five cards may be distributed in the deal. But it is bound to come right sometimes, and then it is worth all the trouble and annoyance of the

previous failures; but whether it is successful or not, it is done as a matter of routine, and if only for the sake of practice, every time the sharp has to deal. He cannot exercise himself too much in such a difficult operation. Still there is a good bit of chancework about it which is not at all acceptable to the sharp, and to obviate this two sharps will often work in secret partnership. The dealer, having memorised his own hand, which he has plenty of time to do thoroughly, waits until his partner's cards are done with. When that moment arrives, the accomplice passes his cards to the dealer in such a way that their faces can be seen. These must be remembered at a glance. The dealer has now ten cards to work with instead of five, and thus the chances are far more than proportionately greater. Some of the known cards are *sure* to be at the top of the pack, ready for the draft, and looking at the last card which has fallen to him on the deal, the sharp can tell what they are. If, in addition, it is the confederate who cuts the cards, of course the game becomes too strong to be beaten. He is sure to cut the pack at the right place.

If the sharp is a fine shuffler, with a good memory, well-trained in this class of work, he can dispense with an accomplice, and do quite as well without one. Supposing it to be his turn to deal next, he looks at his hand, and if the cards he holds are not of much consequence, he 'passes,' that is, he stands out of the game for the time

being. Meanwhile he gathers up the pack and discards, and keeping the faces of the cards turned away from him he evens them up in readiness for the deal. Then he waits until the two or three hands that are being played are called or shown up. With a glance, he remembers as many of these cards as he conveniently can, places them either at the top or bottom of the pack and 'holds' them during the shuffle, arranging their position in the pack as in the former cases.

The last card which comes to him on the deal being one of these, he knows the sequence of several of the top cards which remain in the pack. Consequently he not only knows what he is giving off in the draft to others, but also what remains for him when it is his turn to draw. If, then, it suits him best to discard, as to which he does not stand in doubt as the other players do, he throws away according to the nature of the cards he will have to draw from the pack to replace his discards. It really is just the same thing as though he had two hands dealt to him instead of one. He has the opportunity of making his selection from at least twice as many cards as either of his opponents.

Unless the reader should happen to be himself a high-class sharp, he can have no idea of how well this is done by some men who make it their speciality. It is a method which renders a good shuffler—expressive term—with a good system of artificial memory, well-nigh invincible at

such a game as Poker. Counting-down is simple, when you can do it; it is impossible of detection by ordinary players, and best of all, *even smart gamblers will stand the work.* After that no more need be said about it.

From the contents of this chapter, the expert reader will see that in so far as manipulation pure and simple is concerned, the sharp of to-day is in a position very little better than that of his prototype of fifty years ago. If we except the improved methods of 'stocking' and so on, which have resulted from the introduction of new shuffles and certain methods of preparing the cards, there are hardly any new developments to record.

That this should be so, and indeed must of necessity be so, will be evident to anyone who has made a study of card-tricks. There are only certain manipulations possible in connection with fifty-two pieces of pasteboard. Generations of keen intellects have already made a study of their possibilities; and like the 'old poets, fostered under friendlier skies,' these have stolen all the best ideas from their unhappy successors. And the worst of it is the ideas have become more or less common property.

To invent a new deception in the way of the manipulation of cards is for all the world like trying to make a new proposition in 'Euclid.' That ancient humb—philosopher I should say—has covered the whole ground; much to the disgust of that hypothetical example of en-

cyclopædic information known as 'any schoolboy.' In our time we have all of us tempered our regret that so great a philosopher should ever die, with the far greater regret that he should ever have lived. His loss would have been 'any schoolboy's' infinite gain. Well, man is born to Euclid as the sparks fly upward, and there is no dodging the difficulty.

It is just the same in the fraudulent manipulation of cards. All that can be done has been done. If it were not so the sharp would be the gainer, therefore it is better as it is.

Nowadays, however, it is quite possible to be a first-rate sharp without being capable of performing the simplest feat of dexterity. This sounds very much like saying that a man might be a thorough mathematician without knowing the multiplication-table, but the cases are not exactly upon all fours. It is quite possible to reason logically without having made the acquaintance of that maid of mystery 'Barbara'; and it is quite possible in like manner to be able to cheat without having recourse to manipulation. It is a thing which is not necessary, and more often than not it is attended with the risk of detection.

The sharp has gone further afield in the augmentation of his resources. He has pressed into his service every device that human ingenuity can conceive or rascality execute, every contrivance that skill can produce,

and even the forces of Nature herself have been made to serve his ends.

Meanwhile the unfortunate dupe has been laying the flattering unction to his soul, that given the understanding of certain primitive forms of manipulation, he has nothing else to fear. Much he knows about it !

There is no fool like the fool who imagines himself wise, and there is no dupe like the 'fly flat,'—the man who 'thinks he knows a thing or two.'

Well, it is not the fault of this book if he is not henceforth a wiser and a richer man.

CHAPTER VII

COLLUSION AND CONSPIRACY

THE words which head this chapter are hard words. One cannot deny it. They are intended to be so. Being so, they belong to the class of utterances which, according to the sages, 'break no bones.' This may be true enough even of collusion and conspiracy. But in all conscience, or the lack of it, these have broken hearts and fortunes enough to compensate for any amount of merely physical incapacity.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that a large proportion of the cheating which goes on, in what is called polite society, is accomplished by these means. The high position of the players is, unfortunately, no guarantee of fidelity. One may be cheated anywhere, even in exclusive clubs of the most *recherché* character, as many know to their cost. Practically, there is no high and dry rock upon which the gambler can perch, and say to the tide of cheating—'Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.' He is not safe anywhere, for he can never tell who may not be tempted, at some time

or other, to resort to dishonest practices. The sharp is not always a professional; he may, now and then, be an amateur. Where the stakes are heavy, the temptation to take an unfair advantage of an opponent is occasionally too great for some to resist; especially where no risk of detection is run in so doing. Accidental circumstances will sometimes give a player overwhelming advantages in the play, of which none but he are aware; and who shall say that he will not avail himself of the opportunity which chance has thrown in his way? Against this sort of thing, however, there is no other safeguard than the watchfulness of the players. Where, then, is the 'game,' the amusement, if one has to play, armed at all points, as it were, and living in dread of pickpockets?

It is not with this sporadic kind of cheating, however, that we now have to deal, but with the systematic banding together of individuals to swindle at play. As a notable example of this kind of thing, the reader will do well to peruse the recital of the following incident, which occurred a few winters ago at one of the leading clubs in the West End of London.

At this club a very favourite game was écarté, played generally 'à la galerie.' That is to say, the bystanders were allowed to bet among themselves, or with the players, as to the result of the game. In this case, the lookers-on form themselves into two parties, one

behind each player, and lay wagers upon the chances of their respective champions.

The doings of this club, then, afforded an opportunity for cheating which was too good to be missed. Certain unprincipled members therefore proposed, and managed to get elected, two clever French card-sharpers. The method of procedure adopted was to place these two men opposed to each other at a card-table, and let them play écarté. As large a 'gallery' as possible was assembled, and then the fun began. There was nothing of refinement or delicacy of operation in the method employed. All that took place was simply that one or the other of the players lost to order. According to how the betting ran, that is to say, according to the player whose winning would put the most money into the pockets of the conspirators, so would the result of the game be. Certain signs were made to the players, unobserved of the outsiders, and in response to these signs the game was made to go in one direction or the other.

The favourite plan appeared to be for all the conspirators to station themselves behind one of the men, and, of course, other members of the club who wished to join in had to take up their position behind the other. The secret brotherhood then made as many bets with those across the table as they could. When this had been effected, their player was sure to win. If the cards

were not running favourably to him, he would put up hands for himself, make the bridge, and give the cards to be cut. No doubt, out of pure courtesy, his opponent would obligingly cut at the required place. At the end of the evening the proceeds were divided among the conspirators.

Well, this little game had gone on for some time, and had doubtless been the means of putting in circulation a good deal of capital which otherwise would have remained locked up, when a most unforeseen and regrettable incident occurred. Among the newly-elected members of the club was one who had some little knowledge of sleight-of-hand. Chancing to be a spectator of the proceedings one evening, he at once 'tumbled to the bridge.' He might well do so, for, as one of the fraternity remarked, the players had latterly become so secure in the ignorance of the members that, owing to their carelessness, the structure referred to had become not so much a bridge as a veritable 'Arc de Triomphe.' Through the enlightenment which was thus brought about, the matter came to be laid before the committee. The result was that Ecarté à la Galerie was prohibited. Those who are familiar with club matters will doubtless remember the circumstance, and know the club to which allusion is made.

A very necessary adjunct to collusion of almost any kind is some system of secret telegraphy. With such a

system in operation between two or more players who are in secret partnership, there are many games in which winning can be made a certainty. The telegraphy, of course, is seldom of a character which would permit those acquainted with it to indulge in secret gossip, but for the most part consists of signs which indicate the names of the cards. Generally speaking there will be two classes of indications, one for suit, and one for value. For instance, if the player who is signalling is seen to lay his right hand open upon the table, that may serve to indicate hearts ; if the hand, instead of lying flat, is resting upon its side, that may mean spades ; if clenched flat on the table, clubs may be signified ; and finally, if clenched and thumb upwards, that may denote diamonds. The values of the cards are no less easy to indicate. If the telegraphist looks upwards, that may mean an ace ; if downwards, a king ; if to the left, a queen ; if straight in front of him, a knave ; if to the right, a ten ; with head on one side, and looking upward, a nine ; ditto, and looking to the right, an eight ; ditto, and to the left a seven, and so on through the whole number. There is no difficulty in arranging a system of this kind, to be worked either by word or sign, and such systems if carefully thought out are very difficult to detect.

Suppose two partners at whist are in collusion and one of them is about to lead. The other may desire him to lead clubs. He may, therefore, address to anyone in

the room a sentence beginning, 'Can you tell me——' The initial letter of the sentence indicates the suit which he desires his partner to lead. If he wanted diamonds he would say 'Do you know——' &c. If it was necessary to call for hearts he would observe, 'Have you seen——' &c. Lastly, if spades were in requisition he would ask some question beginning, 'Shall you have——' These things are all very simple, but they mean a great deal, sometimes, in a game of cards.

Another system of signalling sometimes adopted is to indicate the fact of certain cards being held by the position in which the cards are laid upon the table. The person signalling, having looked at his hand, wishes to let his accomplice know that he holds a certain card of importance in the game. Therefore, whilst waiting till the other players have sorted their hands, he closes up his cards for the moment, and lays them before him on the table. The manner of their disposition will give the required cue, or, as it is called, 'office.' The end of the cards farthest from the operator may be taken to represent a kind of pointer, which is set opposite to some particular figure upon an imaginary dial, supposed to be drawn upon the table. Several cards can be indicated in this way, and for others additional factors can be introduced. For instance, the cards may be spread a little, the top card may project a little to one side or over one end, or the operator may keep his fingers rest-

ing upon the cards. In fact, the variety of signals is infinite. From the laying down of a cigar to the taking up of a glass of wine, from the opening of the mouth to the stroking of the chin, every movement, however simple and unsuspicious, can be made the means of cheating at almost any game. A code of signals to indicate every card in the pack, and no more difficult to decipher than the Morse code in telegraphy, can be arranged by anyone in five minutes. Indeed, the Morse code itself can be used in connection with what the French sharps call 'La dusse invisible,' a system of signalling to an accomplice by pressure of the foot under the table. In using this system care must, of course, be taken not to tread on the wrong person's toes.

An instance of card-sharping, involving the use of secret telegraphy, once came under the author's notice, in connection with the projected exposure of a noted card-sharp. The circumstances of the case arose in the following manner.

It is well known that one of the most able and uncompromising among exposers of fraud at the present day is Mr. Henry Labouchere, M.P., the Editor and Proprietor of 'Truth.' In the columns of that widely read and influential publication, the trenchant criticisms and fearless utterances of 'Scrutator' have done yeoman's service in the cause of truth and justice.

The author has had the privilege upon several occa-

sions of being associated with Mr. Labouchere in the running to earth of impostors of various kinds, and one of those occasions was in connection with the case of the sharp above referred to. Some of the details will doubtless occur to the minds of those who recollect the name of the man known as Lambri Pasha. It is advisable to say 'known as,' for whether his real name was anything resembling that there is nothing to show. If there is one thing which one may be inclined to believe more than another, it is that although Lambri the man may have been, Pasha he certainly was not.

This man Lambri, then, an Italian by birth and a sharp by profession, had carried on his operations upon so large a scale as to bring himself prominently before the notice of 'Scrutator.' As usual in such cases, 'Scrutator' proceeded to make short work of him.

At the time referred to, this Lambri happened to have a quarrel with one of his accomplices, and in revenge this man revealed to Mr. Labouchere the entire *modus operandi* of the means used by his employer to cheat the gamblers in those high circles to which he had obtained access.

This being the case, the author was approached by Mr. Labouchere with a view to arranging a plan of action whereby the arch swindler might be caught red-handed, and the exposure made complete. The following scheme was accordingly devised. The author, in the

guise of a country squire supposed to be of great wealth, was to be presented to Lambri, and invited to join in the game of baccarat, specially arranged for the 'staging' of the little drama which was to follow.

Needless to say it was not proposed that the author, although armed, should be alone in a venture which promised to result in violence of a more or less pronounced type. Among the other guests it was arranged to have some whose daily avocations were not altogether unconnected with Scotland Yard.

Lambri's system was an exceedingly simple one. It was worked with the assistance of a confederate, and baccarat was the game principally favoured. In this game three packs of cards are used in combination, forming one large pack of 156 cards. It is obviously impossible to hold this bulky pack in the hands with any degree of convenience whilst the cards are being shuffled; therefore the shuffle is accomplished by standing the cards on edge upon the table with their faces turned away from the dealer, and in this position they are mixed together. Lambri, having taken the 'bank,' would proceed to shuffle the cards in the manner described. During this operation, and as the various cards were brought to the front, the confederate, who had taken up a convenient position, would indicate to his principal their value by means of a code of signals arranged for that purpose. From the explanations already given the

reader will have no difficulty in deducing the manner in which the cards were put up for the advantage of the 'bank.'

In order to detect this manœuvre, then, it would be necessary to watch the proceedings from the commencement, note the arrangement adopted, and at the right moment give the signal for seizing both cards and dealer.

Preparations having been made for carrying this plan into effect, and all due precautions having been taken, it was hoped that Lambri would quietly walk into the snare which had been set for him. 'The best laid schemes,' however, 'gang aft agley.' Whether the confederate had played fast and loose with both sides, which is more than probable, or whether information had leaked out through some other channel, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, however, that Lambri obtained an inkling of what was in progress, and took steps—or rather, 'made tracks'—accordingly. The day previous to that decided upon for the exposure the accomplice received a telegram from Paris informing him that the object of our kind attentions, owing to pressure of important business, would be detained there for some weeks.

There can be no doubt that the affairs which so suddenly called him to Paris were both pressing and important; for, to all appearance, they have occupied his attention ever since. That appointment has never been kept, and, so far as can be ascertained, he has never from

that date to this put in an appearance in England. To all his former friends and acquaintances he is 'lost to sight,' though, to a great many of them, he undoubtedly is 'to memory dear,' and *very* dear.

A sharp may generally be trusted to arrive at a sound decision in all matters affecting his own interests; and it certainly cannot be said that 'Lambri Pasha' has proved himself to be an exception to the rule.

At baccarat collusion and conspiracy are generally used for the purpose of 'rooking' some particular individual of the pronounced 'Juggins' type, and the plan of operation is somewhat as follows.

We will suppose that the field of action is the card-room of some small club, where baccarat is played clandestinely, and for heavy stakes. Among the members who are addicted to this pastime there is one youngster with more money than brains, and several of the reverse characteristics. Half a dozen of these latter habitués of the club will sit around a table prepared for the game in an upper chamber, waiting the advent of their victim. Upon the table in front of the dealer is the shoe containing the proper number of packs: the cards being arranged, we will say, to give six winning coups to the bank, and then to lose right out to the end. They are not playing—far from it, although the table may be strewn with money. Theirs is a waiting game for the present, and they are passing the time as best they can.

When the dupe arrives at the club it is whispered to him that there is a little game in progress upstairs. His arrival is signalled to the conspirators, and by the time the innocent fledgling reaches the room, there is a game apparently in full blast. The new-comer sees that the bank is winning every time. At the end of the six winning coups the dealer says he has won enough, or makes some other excuse for retiring from the game. A new dealer is therefore required, and it does not need much persuasion to induce the 'mug' to take the bank. There is a superstition to the effect that banks which commence luckily for the dealer will continue so to the end, and the unfortunate youth never suspects that it is a 'put-up job' for him. Consequently he sits down to play, and naturally he loses everything to the end of the deal. The 'Juggins,' however jubilant he may have been, soon finds that he has no cause for rejoicing. You see, when a man takes the bank in the middle of a game he cannot have the cards shuffled, but must take them just as they lie on the table, and continue the game from the point at which the last dealer left it. If proceedings of this kind are not to be stigmatised as wholesale robbery, it is difficult to see how they are to be described.

The most common method of cheating at poker in clubs and private houses alike, but particularly in good society, is one which is accomplished by means of collusion, and

in connection with that process of the game known as 'raising out.'

In poker, the bets of the players are raised in rotation around the table, and the players who wish to remain 'in'—that is to say, those who do not wish to forfeit what they have already staked—must all have equal stakes in the pool. Now, unless a man has a particularly good hand he is not disposed to risk too much upon its chance of winning; consequently, when the stakes have risen to a certain amount, he will stand out rather than go beyond what he has already risked.

Two men, then, in secret partnership, upon sitting down to play, will contrive to get the man with most money, or the best player (their greatest antagonist) between them. Therefore, if these two men systematically raise their bets, whether they have good hands or not, they must eventually reach the point at which the other players will 'go out.' If the man between them wishes to remain in, he must make good, or, in other words, bring his stakes up to an amount equal to those of the conspirators. This he may do for some time, but sooner or later the game will become 'too hot' for him and he will go out. He is between two fires, and stands no chance whatever. Then, everyone else having gone out, the game is in the hands of the two sharps, and they can finish it in any way they think best. They may keep on raising each other for a time, until at last one of them refuses to stake another 'chip,' and throws

away his hand, and then the other simply takes the pool. Or one of them may 'call' the other, and upon seeing the hand may throw his own away without showing it, the inference being that it is not so good as that of his supposed antagonist. There is really no need for the other players to see either of the hands. They cannot be called, because one or the other of them is always raising his stakes, and until the stakes are made good without anyone raising, the call is not complete and no hands are shown. Then, when all the other players are 'raised out,' there is nobody left to call upon them to show their hands. At the end of the evening, of course, they divide the spoil.

These things may all appear to be very simple, but they are extremely difficult of detection by outsiders. Indeed, it is the very simplicity of collusion that constitutes the great charm of its employment, and the great safeguard against its detection. Unlike manipulation, it can be accomplished by anyone and gives far less indication of its existence. The only drawback to it is that where there is a conspiracy there is always a chance of rogues falling out, and honest men being put in possession of the truth.

In every kind of game, and in every department of trickery, collusion has been utilised as a ready means of arriving at the consummation of the sharp's desires. It is seldom, indeed, that a scheme of any magnitude is

devised without more than one person concerned in it ; and the accomplices have assumed every kind of guise, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, waiters, club-porters, card-canvassers, and even officers of justice. There is no end to the disguises in which these individuals have appeared, and apparently no limit to their ingenuity.

One of the most immense frauds ever perpetrated in connection with sharping, and in which the fewest persons were concerned, was that recorded by Houdin. At the outset it was entirely conceived and executed by one sharp alone, although another took part in it at a later stage, much to the disappointment of the original promoter of the scheme. As this incident is of interest, and exhibits in a striking manner the possibilities of cheating which exist at all times and in all places, the reader shall have the benefit of its perusal. Although the events happened many years ago, the story is not very well known, and is well worthy of retelling.

At the date of the narrative, Havana, according to the historian, was the place most addicted to gambling of any in the world. As he also observed, that was not saying a little. And it was in that haven of delight that the occurrences related took place.

A Spanish sharp, named Bianco, purchased in his own country a tremendous stock of playing-cards ; and, in view of the undertaking in which he was about to embark, he opened every one of the packs, marked all the cards,

and sealed them up again in their wrappers. This he did so skilfully that there was no evidence of the fact that the packages had ever been tampered with. The stupendous feat involved in a proceeding of this kind being successfully accomplished, the cards were shipped off to Havana and there disposed of to the card-dealers at a ruinous sacrifice. So good indeed were these cards, and so cheap, that in a very little while the dealers could not be induced to purchase those of any other make. Thus after a time there were hardly any cards circulating in the place other than those which had been falsified by Bianco.

The sharp, it may be imagined, was not long in following upon the track of his cards; and being a man of good address, he contrived to obtain introductions into the best society. He played everywhere, of course, and where he played he won. Hardly ever being called upon to use any cards but his own, it is not surprising that he should rapidly acquire wealth among people whose chief recreation appeared to be gambling. To avert suspicion, however, he was careful to complain constantly of the losses he had sustained.

Among the various clubs in Havana was one which was of the most exclusive kind. The committee was so vigilant, and such great precautions were taken to prevent the admission of doubtful characters, that hitherto it had been kept free from the contamination of cheating. Into

this club, however, Bianco contrived to effect an entrance, and carried on his operations therein with much success. He was destined, notwithstanding the zeal of the committee, to remain alone in the field but a very short time. Another sharp, a Frenchman this time, contrived also to obtain admission to the club ; and he, too, set to work to prospect the country, thinking that he had possessed himself of a gold-mine as yet unexploited.

Accordingly, this second adventurer, Laforcade by name, seized a favourable opportunity of appropriating a quantity of the club cards. These he took home with him for the purpose of marking them, intending to return them when marked to the stock from which they had been taken. One may imagine the man's surprise upon opening the packs to find that every card had already been marked.

Evidently, then, somebody had been before him, and Laforcade determined to find out who it could be. He made inquiries as to where the cards were obtained, and, purchasing some at the same place, found that these also were marked. In fact, every pack that he could procure had been tampered with in like manner. Here then was a gigantic swindle, and he determined to profit by it. He would let the other man do all the work, but *he* would share in the profits. If the other man, whoever he might be, would not listen to reason, he would threaten to hand him over to the police.

Having arrived at this decision, he set to work to watch the play of the various members of the club, and, naturally, the invariable good fortune of Bianco could not fail to attract his attention. Keeping strict watch upon that gentleman's proceedings, Laforcade soon arrived at the conclusion that Bianco, and no other, was the man of whom he was in search. He therefore took an early opportunity of engaging his brother-swindler in a quiet game of écarté, whilst no other members of the club were present.

The game was played, and Bianco won, as a matter of course. Then, as usual, the winner asked his opponent if he was satisfied, or whether he would prefer to have his revenge in another game. Much to his surprise, however, instead of saying simply whether he preferred to play again or not, the loser coolly rested his elbows on the table, and regarding his adversary composedly, gave him to understand that the entire secret of the cheerful little deception which was being practised was in his possession. This, of course, came rather as a bomb-shell into Bianco's camp, and reduced him at once to a condition in which any terms of compromise would be acceptable, in preference to exposure and imprisonment.

Matters having arrived at this point, Laforcade proposed terms upon which he was willing to come to an understanding with the Spaniard. These were,

briefly, that Bianco should continue his system of plunder, on condition that he handed over to his fellow-cheat one-half of the proceeds. These terms were agreed to, and upon that basis of settlement the agreement was entered into.

For some time after this all went well with the two swindlers. Laforcade established himself in luxury, and gave his days to pleasure. Bianco ran all the risk ; the other had nothing to do but sit at home and receive his share of the profits. It is true he could keep no check upon his associate, to see that he divided the spoil equitably ; but, holding the sword of Damocles over him, he could always threaten him with exposure if the profits were not sufficiently great.

At length, however, Bianco began to tire of the arrangement, which perhaps was only natural. Besides, the supply of marked cards was beginning to run short, and could not be depended upon much longer. This being so, the prime mover of the plot having won as much as he possibly could, promptly vacated the scene of his exploits.

The unfortunate Laforcade thus found himself, as the Americans say, 'left.' The prospect was not altogether a pleasant one for him. He had acquired expensive tastes which he might no longer be enabled to indulge ; he had accustomed himself to luxuries he could no longer hope to enjoy. He had not the

skill of the departed Bianco; yet, nevertheless, he was compelled to (metaphorically) roll up his sleeves and work for his living. Things were not so bad as they might have been. There was still a good number of falsified cards in use; so he determined to make the best possible use of his opportunities while they remained.

He therefore set to work with ardour, and success largely attended his efforts. At last, however, the crash came. He was detected in cheating, and the whole secret of the marked cards was brought to light.

Even in this unfortunate predicament Laforcade's good-fortune, strange to say, did not desert him. He was taken before the Tribunal, tried, and *acquitted*. Absolutely nothing could be proved against him. It is true the cards were marked, but then, so were nearly all the others in Havana. Laforcade did not mark them, as was proved in the evidence. He did not import them. To all intents and purposes he had nothing to do with them whatever. It could not even be proved that he knew of the cards being marked at all. Thus the case against him broke down utterly, and he got off scot free. It is, nevertheless, presumable that he did not long remain in that part of the world. As to what became of Bianco, nothing is known. Possibly his record concluded with the familiar words 'lived happily ever after'; but most probably not. The end of such men is seldom a happy one.

The recital of the above-mentioned circumstances will serve to accentuate the contention that it is impossible wholly to guard against cheating. Here was a case in which the utmost caution was observed, in order to exclude cheats and impostors from a club; and yet it is seen that, within a very short time, two men of the sharp persuasion contrived to effect an entrance. If this is possible in the case of a club, where there is not only a committee to investigate the *bona fides* of every applicant for membership, but also a large body of members presumably alive to their own interests who have to be satisfied of the fitness of the candidates for election, what chance has a mere private individual of protecting himself against the sharp and his insidious ways? Those two men, Bianco and Laforcade, must have had friends among the inhabitants of Havana, friends who would have been horrified to know the real character of those whose intimacy they found so agreeable. Among the dupes of those two adventurers there must have been some who would have resented bitterly any aspersion of the honesty of their associates. We have seen the return they gained for their friendship, and what has happened once may happen again.

There is only one course to pursue of which it can be said that it is absolutely safe. It is an extremely objectionable one, no doubt; but we are speaking, just now, of absolute safety. There is nothing for it but to

suspect your best friend, if he is a gambler. The desire for gain affects equally the high and the low. The instinct of theft is rife alike in rich and poor. To use a colloquialism, all are tarred with the same brush. The only difference is that what is called stealing in the poor starving wretch who takes a loaf, to save the parish the expense of a funeral, becomes, in the case of his more fortunate and richer fellow-sinner, merely a little intellectual peculiarity, which is dignified with the name of kleptomania. The poor man envies the rich man his wealth; the rich man envies the poor man his solitary ewe lamb. Instances of this kind have never been wanting at any time in the world's history, and even in matters of everyday life; but once a man becomes a gambler, there is every prospect that his desire for gain will eventually overmaster all the finer feelings of his nature. You doubt it? Well, search the columns of your newspaper, and every day you shall find at least one case where some foolish fellow has stolen property, or money, entrusted to his care, and has devoted the proceeds of his theft to gambling purposes. There is every reason in the world for suspecting anyone of dishonesty who is found to have taken to gambling. If it is not so, then all history lies, and past experience counts for nothing.

Closely allied to the subject of conspiracy is that of the maintenance of places in which gambling is systemati-

cally carried on, in defiance of the law, and in spite of the utmost watchfulness of the police. It is true that one of the most familiar head-lines upon the newspaper placards is: 'Raid on a Club! The accused at Bow Street.' Every week our attention is attracted by some announcement of that kind, made in letters six inches high. But we hardly ever give the matter a second thought; the whole thing is too common an occurrence. Yet not one tithe of these gambling-dens is ferreted out. Crushed here to day, they spring up there to-morrow. They are perennial. Like the phœnix, they arise from their own ashes—but under another name. And where the players are to be found, there will the sharps be gathered together. That is a thing which goes without saying, and is open to no manner of doubt.

In these cases, of course, both sharps and flats are drawn together by one common bond of union—that of defeating the aim of the law for the suppression of gaming-houses. The dupe merely sees in the efforts of the Government to protect him from the consequences of his folly an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the subject. Therefore, he conspires with the sharp to run counter to the law, and thus plays right into the hands of his natural enemy. That he suffers in consequence is no one's fault but his own; unfortunately, it is not he alone who suffers. Those who are nearest, and should be dearest, to him are those who suffer most.

The devices resorted to by the occupants of clandestine gaming-houses in order to conceal all traces of the appliances used for the purpose of gambling would fill many volumes in their description, but as they do not form part and parcel of our subject we cannot enter into an account of them. Probably one of the most ingenious ideas ever conceived for the immediate removal of all signs of gaming apparatus in the event of a police raid, was that which was actually utilised at a so-called club a good many years ago. The plan was briefly this. Upon the fire in the card-room a large kettle of water was kept constantly boiling, ostensibly for the purpose of diluting the ardent liquors imbibed by the members. The whole of the gaming utensils, dice-boxes and everything else, were made of one of the alloys known as fusible metals, which melt at a lower temperature than boiling water. An alloy of bismuth, tin, lead and cadmium can be made to melt at a far lower temperature than that of boiling water. In the event of a raid being made upon the club, then, the whole of the appliances were put into the kettle, where they at once melted, and even though any one looked in the kettle during the search there was nothing to be seen.

It is in places of this kind where collusion and conspiracy are most rampant. Those who have the ability to devise methods of cheating the police may well be supposed to have sufficient ingenuity to cheat the players.

Those who *must* gamble, therefore, should be very wary when they entrust themselves and their money to the tender mercies of the society encountered at such resorts. With this word of caution we will bring the present chapter to a conclusion.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GAME OF FARO

FARO may almost be said to occupy in America the position of a national game. The methods of cheating used in connection with it are so numerous and so ingenious that it becomes really necessary to devote an entire chapter specially to them. Since there are parts of the world, however, outside America where the game is little known, and since it is necessary that the reader should understand something of it to enable him to follow the explanations, the first step must be to give some little idea of the nature of the game and the manner in which it is played. The following paragraphs, then, will contain a brief description of its salient features, and also of the apparatus or tools which are required in playing it.

We will commence with the accessories first. These are: (1) the faro-box, (2) the check-rack, (3) the cue-keeper, (4) cue-cards, (5) the shuffling-board, (6) the layout, and (7) the faro-table. These, together with a pack of playing-cards, constitute the apparatus

employed. Let us take the various items in their order as given.

1. *The faro-box.*—This is a metal box in which the cards are placed, face upwards, and from which they are dealt one at a time. Fig. 37 illustrates the back view of such a dealing-box.

It will be seen that the box is open at the back, and cut away at the top sufficiently to allow a large portion of the face of the top card to be visible. The plate

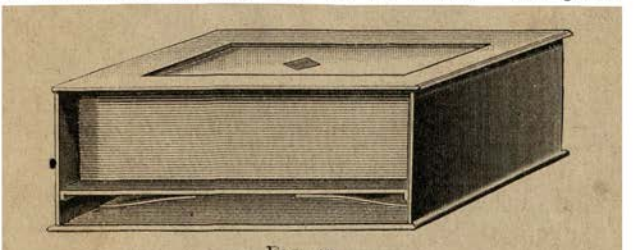

FIG. 37.

forming the top overlaps the front side about one-eighth of an inch, and below its front edge is a slit, only just sufficiently wide to allow one card at a time to be pushed out, so that the cards are bound to be dealt one by one, and in the order they occupy in the pack. They are slipped out by the thumb, which presses upon them through the aperture in the top plate. The cards are inserted through the back, and constantly pressed upwards by a movable plate or partition, below which are springs sufficiently strong for the purpose.

It is presumable that the object of this box is to prevent any possibility of the cards being tampered with. That it not only can be made to fail in this purpose, but also to play directly into the hands of the cheat, we shall see later on.

2. *The check-rack.*—This is a polished wooden tray, lined with billiard-cloth. It is used by the dealer, to contain his piles of counters and his money. It stands at his left hand, upon the faro-table, during play.

3. *The cue-keeper, or cue-box.*—This is a piece of apparatus used for the purpose of recording the cards as they are played, and is under the control of a man who is specially told off to attend to it. By its means at any stage of the game the players can see at a glance what cards have already been played, and what remain in the pack. It is constructed upon the principle of the ancient 'abacus' or 'obolus,' and consists of a framework of wood, supporting thirteen wires, upon each of which slide four small balls (fig. 38).

Opposite each wire there is attached to the framework a miniature reproduction of one of the cards of a suit. In faro, as in poker, the suit of any card is of no importance. For all practical purposes the pack may be considered as consisting simply of four aces, four kings, four queens, and so on. Therefore, no record is kept of the suits of the cards which have been played, but only of their values. The position of the balls at

the commencement of the game is at the left hand side of their respective divisions, as shown in the illustration. When a king, for example, is drawn out of the box, one ball, opposite the miniature king on the cue-keeper, is slipped to the right, and so on until all the fifty-two cards have been played, when, of course, the whole of the balls are at the right of the apparatus. The

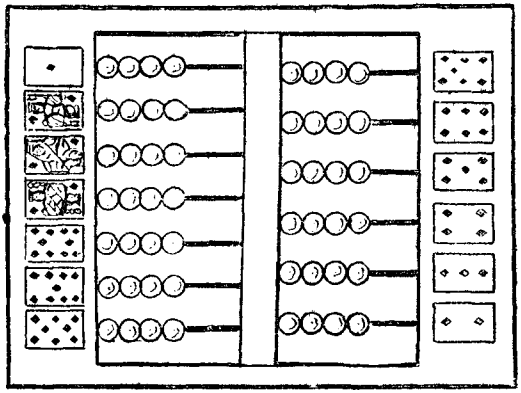

FIG. 38.

person who registers the progress of the game with this accessory is styled the 'case-keeper.'

4. *Cue-cards.*—These are small cards upon which are printed the names of the thirteen cards, a space being left opposite each name, for the purpose of enabling the players to check off the cards as they are played. They are sometimes used in place of a case-keeper; but, even

where a case-keeper is employed, they are utilised by the players for recording the winning and losing cards. Any card which wins is marked with a cross, and one which loses is marked with a nought. Fig. 39 represents a cue-card which has been partially filled up in this way, and the cards which have been played so far, it will be noticed, are readily distinguishable. The cards lost are two queens, two nines, two sevens, and three sixes. Besides showing what cards have been lost and won, the

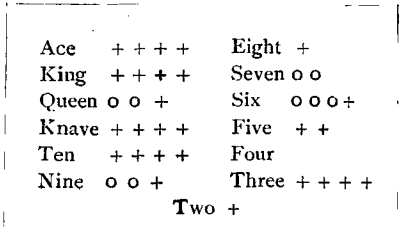

FIG. 39.

cue-card also tells what cards have yet to be played. Thus, at the stage of the game indicated in fig. 39, there are still remaining in the dealing-box one queen, one nine, three eights, two sevens, two fives, four fours, and three twos. This convenient record prevents the possibility of a player betting upon cards which have already been played.

The case-keeper and cue-cards were primarily introduced with the object of keeping a check upon the dealer,

and of preventing him from using a pack containing more than fifty-two cards, or in which there was not the right number of each value. We shall see presently how he manages to get over that difficulty.

5. *The shuffling-board.*—This is a thin slab of wood or metal, covered with billiard-cloth. It stands in front of the dealer, and upon it are placed the faro-box and the piles of winning and losing cards. It is upon this board, also, that the cards are shuffled; hence its name.

6. *The layout.*—The designation of this adjunct to the game is derived from the fact that it forms that part of the table upon which the players 'lay out' their stakes. Usually it is a green cloth, having painted upon it a representation of the thirteen cards of one suit (see diagram of the faro-table, fig. 40).

7. *The faro-table.*—This is simply an oblong table, having a recess or cavity cut out in the centre of one of the long sides. In this recess the dealer sits, being thus enabled to be as near to the layout as possible, and at the same time to have all his appliances within easy reach. Fig. 40 will give the reader a clear idea of the relative positions occupied by the dealer, the players, and the various component items of the apparatus.

The appliances above described being available, the game is played in the following manner:—

At the termination of a deal the cards are all lying face upwards upon the shuffling-board in two heaps at

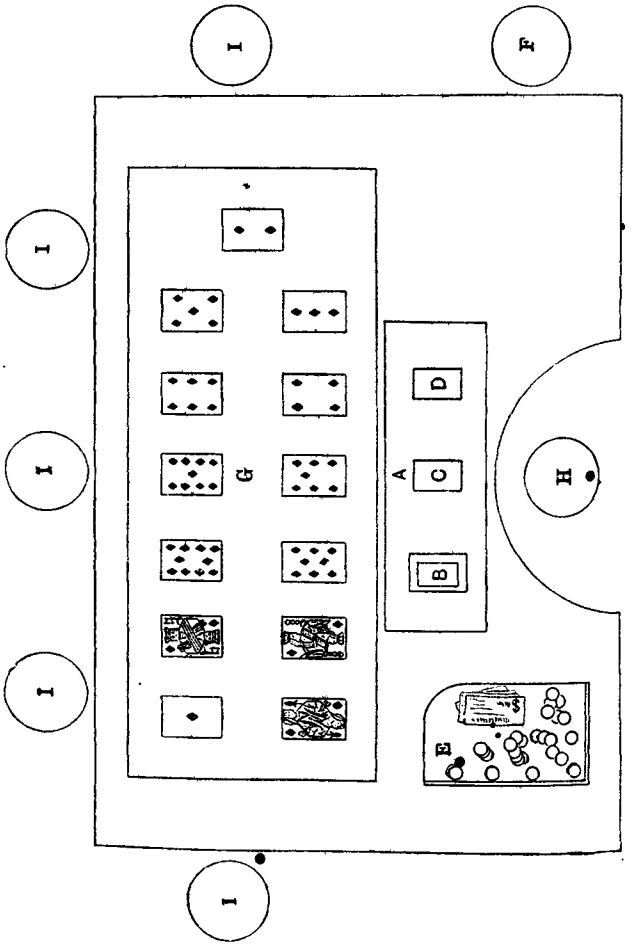

FIG. 40.—The Faro-Table.

A, shuffling-board. B, faro-box. C, pile of losing cards. D, pile of winning cards. E, check-tray. F, case-keeper. G, layout. H, dealer. I, I, I, I, I, players.

'C' and 'D,' and the faro-box is empty. Without taking the cards off the table, but simply turning them back upwards, the dealer mixes the two heaps together. The pack is then cut and placed with the faces of the cards upwards in the dealing-box. The players then stake their money, placing their stakes upon the layout over the card which they think will win. Each player, of course, may select any card he pleases, irrespective of the fact that another player may choose to bet upon the same card. In fact, they can all back the same card if they like. This, however, is a case which is rather rare, anyhow at the outset of a game. Meanwhile the top card of the pack has all along been visible to the players, through the aperture in the top of the box. This card, therefore, counts for nothing, and no bets can be made with respect to it. From the top card downwards, the cards alternately win for the players and the 'bank,' or dealer. The second card, then, when displayed will win for the players.

All the bets having been made, the dealer draws off the top card and discloses the face of the second. The top card is placed upon the shuffling-board in the position indicated by 'C' (fig. 40), and those players who have staked their money upon the card in the layout which corresponds in value to the card which is now seen through the window of the dealing-box will have to receive from the dealer the amount of their stakes.

If no player has bet upon that card the dealer of course has to pay nothing.

The dealer has now to draw off another card from the box and display the face of the third. As explained above, this card will win for the bank. The second card is therefore drawn off, and placed upon the shuffling-board at 'D,' and the players who have staked their money upon the card representing the one which is now visible will lose their stakes to the dealer.

The two cards thus played constitute what is called a 'turn.' After each turn the dealer pays the money he has lost and receives what he has won. All money staked upon cards other than those which have either won or lost remains undisturbed upon the layout. The players are then at liberty to rearrange their bets in any manner they may think fit, and the game continues. Again the top card is removed from the box, revealing a fourth, and placed upon the card already at 'C.' As before, those who have staked upon the card now showing in the box receive the amount of their bets in due course. And so on until no more cards remain in the box.

There is one advantage enjoyed by the dealer in which the other players do not participate. When it so happens that both cards of a 'turn' are of the same value, both kings, for instance, such an occurrence is termed a 'split,' and a split means that the bank loses nothing, but, on the contrary, takes half the money, if any, which is lying upon

the card of that value in the layout. This advantage or *refait* gives the bank a preponderance of the chances to the amount of about three per cent.

The above is the simplest form of the game; but, in reality, it is usually played in a more complicated manner. For instance, the players can 'string their bets'; that is to say, they can bet on more than one card at a time. A counter placed between any two cards signifies backing either of the two cards to win, and then the player will win if either of those cards wins, or lose if either loses, and so on. A single counter may be so placed as to back all the high cards to win, and the low ones to lose, or *vice versa*. By 'coppering,' or, in other words, placing a special counter called a 'copper,' upon his stake, a player can bet that any card will lose instead of win.

With this short explanation of the game, we will proceed to consider the various methods of cheating at faro.

The swindling which is practised in connection with this game, and for which it affords ample scope, may be divided into two kinds. Firstly, where the players cheat the bank; and secondly, where the bank cheats the players. This latter class may again be considered under two heads, viz. cheating with fair cards and fair boxes, and cheating by means of prepared cards and mechanical arrangements connected with the faro-box and other appliances of the game.

We will take, first of all, the methods employed by the players to cheat the bank. This is done where the players are professional sharps who have contrived to 'put up a mug' (*i.e.* to persuade a dupe) to take the bank. The general practice is for one of the conspirators to have a room of his own laid out for the game, and into this very private room the victim is decoyed. In a case of this kind the 'rig is worked,' or in other words the swindle is perpetrated, by means of a dealing-box, so constructed as to enable the players to know what cards will win for them, and what will win for the bank. With this knowledge they run no risk of staking their money on the wrong cards. The contrivances for effecting this desirable result are known as 'tell-boxes.' Broadly speaking, these are of two kinds, the 'sand-tell' and the 'needle-tell.'

The sand-tell box is so called because it is used in conjunction with prepared cards, which have been 'sanded' or roughened on one side, or both sides, as the case may be.[1] The cards which are intended to 'tell' are left smooth on their faces; all the others are slightly roughened on both sides. The effect of this mode of preparation is that, whilst the cards which are roughened on both sides will tend to cling together, any card which lies immediately upon the smooth face of a 'tell-card' will slip easily.

The box with which these cards are used is shown in

[1] See Chapter IX.—'Prepared Cards.'

fig. 41, which represents a section taken through the centre of the box, from top to bottom. Referring to 'A' in the illustration, *s*, *s* are two of the springs which press upwards upon the partition *p*, this in turn keeping the cards tightly pressed against the top of the box, in which the aperture or window *w* is cut. These details are of course common to all dealing-boxes, as already explained. The trickery, however, in this instance is in connection

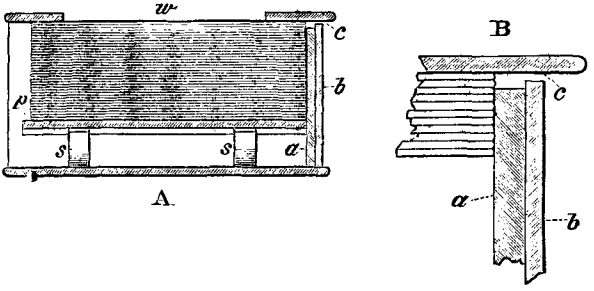

FIG. 41.

with the front side of the box. Instead of being of an equal thickness all round, the front is made double. That is to say, an additional plate of metal is put inside the box, covering the whole of the front plate, except that it does not reach the top by the thickness of two cards.

'B' in the illustration represents an enlarged sectional view of the mouth of the box. The additional plate is shown at *a*; *b* is the normal thickness of the

front, and *c* is the slit through which the cards are pushed out.

The prepared cards being put into a box of this description, the effect produced in dealing is as follows. If the third card from the top is one of those which has been roughened on both sides, the second card will adhere to it; consequently the act of drawing off the top card will not cause the second to alter its position in the box. If, however, the third card should happen to be one of the tell-cards, whose face has been left smooth, the top card will draw the second one a little distance to the right over the top of the plate *a*. The second card, however, cannot be drawn right out, because the slit *c* is not wide enough to allow more than one card to pass at a time. It is obvious, then, that if the players have some means of knowing whether the second card moves or not, they can tell whether the card immediately underneath it is a tell-card or the reverse.

On reference to the illustration it will be manifest that the actual distance moved by the second card when drawn aside in this way can only be very slight. Indeed, it would not do to allow of much movement, or the dealer might notice it. Therefore, special means have to be adopted to enable the sharps to detect the small difference in the position of the cards. The necessary indication is readily obtained by means of what are known as 'sighters.' These are simply minute dots upon the

faces of the cards. Upon each card one of these dots is placed, in such a position that when the card comes to the top the dot will be close to the edge of the aperture, but if the one below it is a smooth or tell-card, the slipping sideways of the card brings the dot away from the edge, and it appears farther to the centre of the opening. Fig. 42 is a diagram representing the top of a sand-tell box under both conditions. The

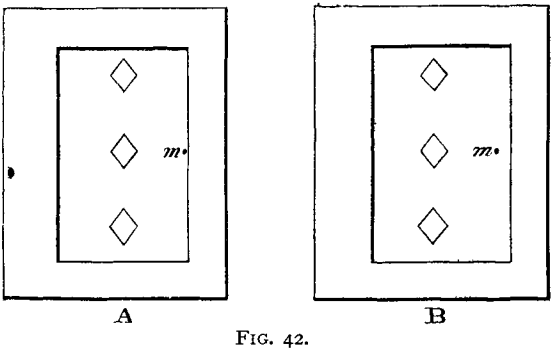

FIG. 42.

dot marked *m* is the sight. In practice, it is much finer than here shown, being in fact only just visible. 'A' indicates the position of the dot when the card below happens to be one which has been roughened. 'B' shows the card drawn to one side, bringing the dot away from the edge, thus intimating the fact that the card immediately underneath is a tell-card, the face of which has been left smooth.

The general practice is to make all the court cards 'tell.' The advantage thus gained is that it is not necessary to bet on any particular card, but simply to back the high cards to win and the low ones to lose, or *vice versa*. This is not so liable to cause suspicion as having all the aces, for instance, to tell. In a case of this latter kind, the slipping of the card would indicate that the next card to be revealed would be an ace ; therefore, if the conspirators are to win, at least one of them must bet upon an ace turning up. Whereas, if all the picture cards are made to tell, not only are there more tell-cards in the pack, but it is only necessary for one player to bet upon the high cards generally. The box simply tells them that a high card will show next, and they make their bets accordingly.

Of course, it would never do for all the players to stake their money alike. That would let the cat out of the bag, with a vengeance. No ; if the next card is to be a high card, one of them will bet upon the high cards ; the others will bet upon particular small cards, avoiding the high ones. They cannot possibly lose on the next card, because they know that it is not one of the low cards which comes next.

It will be remembered that, in the description given of the game, we saw that the bets are made just before the dealing out of each pair of cards or 'turn.' Therefore the indication given by the tell-box is only of use to the

players before a turn commences, that is to say, before the first card of the pair is shown. They cannot change their bets until the second card of the pair is shown and the turn is played. Therefore, supposing the box indicates that the first card of the next turn, the one that wins for the players, is a court card, and that one of the players has consequently backed the high cards, the others must be careful how they arrange their bets. It may happen that one of them has put his money upon a card which will be the next to turn up ; and this being the one which wins for the bank, that stake will be lost. Therefore, they have to arrange matters so that the highest stake which can possibly be won by the dealer is less than that of the player who has staked his money upon the card or cards which they know will win on the first draw. Or it may be that the other players will 'copper' their bets upon the low cards and thus play for absolute safety.

These manœuvres are necessary, and are here pointed out because they may be of assistance as a guide to the investigation of suspected cases of cheating by the means just described. If it should be found that, in a game of faro, it constantly happens that one of the players—not necessarily the same player—always wins on the first card of a turn, and that on the second card the others either do not lose at all, or, at any rate, that the amount which either of them loses is

less than that which the other has won, it may be safely inferred that cheating is in progress.

The second kind of tell-box, which is used for the same purpose as that we have just investigated, we have already referred to as the 'needle-tell.' This box is also used with prepared cards, but the preparation is of a very different kind. In this instance there is no roughening of the surfaces of the cards, but those which are required to tell are cut to a slightly different shape to the others. In some respects the needle is an improvement upon the sand-tell; the cards are more easily shuffled than is the case with the 'sanded' ones, the clinging of which might arouse suspicion with an intelligent dealer. The dealing-box, however, is more complicated in its construction.

The tell-cards are cut with a slight projection at one end. Fig. 43 will give an idea of the exact shape. The projecting end will be noticed at *a*. Needless to say, in the cards actually used the defect in the card would not be more pronounced than is absolutely necessary.

The dealing-box is so constructed that when either of the tell-cards arrives at a certain position (usually the fourth or eighth card from the top) the projecting corner presses against a light spring and causes a little 'needle' or point to project from the side of the box. Frequently one of the rivets with which the box is put together is made to push out a little. Whatever the index may be,

however, it does not move sufficiently to attract attention. It is only those who are looking for it who know when it 'tells.' A movement of one thirty-second of an inch is ample for the sharp eyes of the swindlers to detect.

The mechanism of the needle-tell, however, is not used solely in connection with cases where the players cheat the bank, it also forms a very necessary accessory to the 'two-card' box to be presently explained. Then

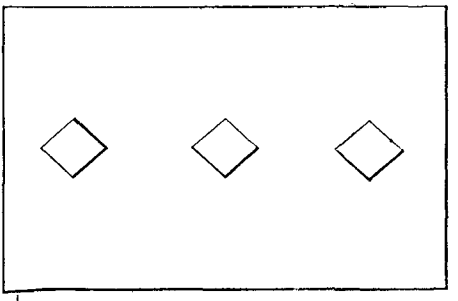

FIG. 43.

it is used to let the dealer know when he is coming to the 'odd,' or fifty-third card.

Having thus elucidated the comparatively simple methods used to cheat the dealer, we now proceed to investigate the more complex devices employed in those cases where the bank cheats the players. As stated in the earlier part of this chapter, the players may be swindled either with fair cards and a fair dealing-box, or by means of mechanical appliances.

When the dealer elects to cheat without the use of mechanism, he is, of course, compelled to resort to manipulation, and to 'put up' the cards in such a way that they will help him to win. The reader will doubtless remember that in the description of the game 'splits' were mentioned as winning for the dealer. That is, when both cards of a turn are of the same value, the dealer takes half the money staked on the card which has split, or turned up twice in succession, the suits, of course, not counting. It is obvious, then, that if the dealer in shuffling the pack can contrive to put up a number of cards in pairs of the same value, his chances of winning are greatly enhanced. Splits, therefore, are the stronghold of the faro dealer's manipulation. If he can only make them plentiful enough without leading the players to suspect anything wrong, he is bound to win in the long run, and to win plenty.

Whilst dealing out the cards in the first game, the dealer determines in his own mind what cards he will make split in the second game. We will suppose he has just drawn a nine from the box, and that this card has to go into pile 'C' (fig. 40). Now, by the laws of the game he is bound to place this card upon the top of the pile to which it belongs, therefore he does so. He may, however, with apparent carelessness, place it just a little on one side, so that he can distinguish it from the other cards He now waits for the appearance of another

nine, and this time one which will have to go into the other pile, 'D.' This one is disposed in the same manner. He has in sight, therefore, two cards of the same value, and if these two cards can be brought together during the shuffle, they will constitute a split. Seizing a favourable opportunity in evening up the two piles of cards, he may skilfully 'strip' the two nines—that is, draw them out from the others and place them at the bottom of their respective piles. There is no fear of losing them now; they are always to hand when required.

It is not necessary, however, that the cards should be put at the bottom. So long as they are each in the same position, in the pile to which they respectively belong, that is all the dealer needs. Suppose the ninth card from the bottom of pile 'C' to be a king, all the man wants is to have the ninth card of pile 'D' a king also. If, therefore, the ninth card of that heap is placed a little to one side, and all the succeeding cards are put above it in like manner, that will leave a division in the pile, into which a king can be stripped at a convenient moment.

If the players are sufficiently lax to allow the dealer to throw the cards carelessly into two heaps, instead of making two even piles, the case is, of course, much simplified. He has only to put the cards directly at the bottom or wherever else he may desire to have them.

Given the fact of certain cards having been placed in

pairs, one of each pair in the same position within its pile, the problem which presents itself for solution is, How can the dealer shuffle the two piles one into the other, so as to bring the proper cards together? In short, How are the splits put up?

This is accomplished by means of what is called the 'faro dealer's shuffle.' It must not be thought that this manipulative device is essentially a trick for cheating; on the contrary, it is an exceedingly fair and honest shuffle, provided that there has been no previous arrangement of the cards. By its use, a pack which has been divided into two equal portions may have all the cards of one half placed alternately with those of the other half at one operation. In faro, the manner of dealing the cards necessarily divides them into two equal parts. This being the case, they are taken up by the dealer, one in each hand. Holding them by the ends, he presses the two halves together so as to bend them somewhat after the manner shown in fig. 44, in the position 'A.' The halves are now 'wriggled' from side to side in opposite directions, with what would be called in mechanism a 'laterally reciprocating motion.' This causes the cards to fly up one by one, from either side alternately, as indicated in the figure at 'B.' Thus it is evident that those cards which have been placed, with malice aforethought, in corresponding positions in the two piles, will come together in a shuffle of this kind, and form splits.

This shuffle is a very difficult one to learn ; but with practice and patience it can be accomplished, and the cards can be made to fly up alternately, without any chance of failure. A dealer, skilled in the devices we have just touched upon, can put up four or five splits in one deal, if he thinks it advisable so to do. By the use of such means he is also enabled to arrange the cards so as to

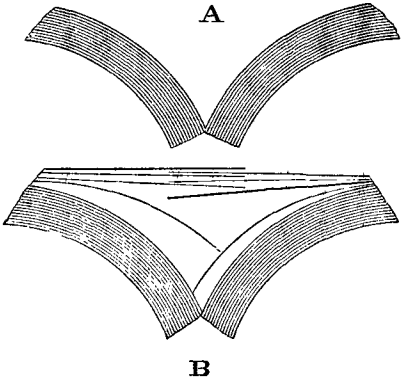

FIG. 44.

checkmate any player who may appear to be following some particular system of betting. Finding that the players are, on the whole, inclined to back the high cards, the dealer may so arrange the pack that the low cards only win for them, the high ones falling to the bank. In this, however, he runs a great risk. It may happen that the players, finding themselves constantly losing on the

high cards, may alter their mode of play, and back the low ones. That would be bad for the bank unless the dealer had a mechanical box which enabled him to alter the run of the cards. Such boxes, however, are obtainable ; and their description is included in the branch of our subject which treats of cheating the players by means of mechanical contrivances, and to which we now proceed.

In cases where the dealer uses apparatus for cheating, his requirements are three in number. Firstly, he must have what is known as a 'two-card' dealing-box, that is, a box which will allow him, whenever he pleases, to withdraw two cards at one time, instead of compelling him to deal them singly. Secondly, he must have an 'odd,' or fifty-third card. Lastly, he requires a mechanical shuffling-board, which adds the 'odd' to the pack, after the cards have been counted at the commencement of the game.

The two-card box is one of the most expensive cheating tools a sharp can use. The prices charged for them are something exorbitant, as may be seen on reference to the catalogues. To be of any use, however, they must be well-made, and then they will earn their cost in a very little time. Badly-made, the sharp would find that, however cheap they appeared to be, they would really be the most expensive and ruinous contrivances he had ever known. They are made in many varieties, and known by as many poetic names, but the effect is the same in all cases. Pressure being applied to some part of the

box, the mouth is caused to open sufficiently wide to allow two cards to be drawn out together. The best boxes are those high-priced commodities of which the catalogues say that they will 'lock up to a square box.' This does not mean a rectangular box, but a box that will bear examination. 'Fair' and 'square,' in this instance, mean the same thing. The only fault in the description is that the box, being false, cannot possibly become genuine with any amount of locking. It should be said that when locked it *appears* to be genuine, and may be examined without fear of the trick being detected. Some boxes are made to lock by sliding them along the table. The bottom moves a little, this movement serving to fix all the movable parts. Some are so arranged that they are always locked. That is their normal condition, so they can be examined at any time. When it is required to widen the mouth and allow two cards to pass out together, a small piece of wire, or 'needle' as it is called, is made to rise out of the shuffling-board or table; this, pressing against one of the rivets, or into a little hole in the bottom of the box, unlocks the mechanism for the moment. Another form of the two-card box is one which has the bottom plate made of very thin metal, the 'springing in' of which, when pressed upon in the centre, unlocks the 'fake.' Some of the forms which unlock by sliding on the table are the most complicated, requiring sometimes three movements to free the working parts and allow the slit to widen.

The movements, of course, have to follow in proper succession, as in any other kind of combination-lock. This prevents any accidental unlocking of the box whilst it is in the hands of strangers.[1]

At the beginning of the game, then, the cards are counted to make sure that there are the proper number, and we will suppose that the dealing-box is a two-card with needle-tell attachment. One of the cards in the pack, therefore, will be cut with the projecting corner. We will suppose it to be the king of diamonds. Another king of diamonds, also cut to 'tell,' is held out in the mechanical shuffling-board. Whilst shuffling the cards, the dealer causes the holdout to add the 'odd' card to the pack. Thus there are two kings of diamonds in use.

The cards being put into the dealing-box the game begins. The dealer keeps his eye upon the needle-tell, and meanwhile unlocks the mechanism of his box; tha is, if it is made to lock, which is not necessarily the case, although safer. When the needle indicates the fact that one of the duplicate cards—in this case a king of diamonds—is immediately below the top card in the box, the dealer has to be guided by circumstances. If the card will win for him, well and good. He deals the cards as they should be dealt and the king falls to him. It is evident that it would never do to have two kings of diamonds turn up in the game, the cue-keeper and cue-

[1] See reprint of dealer's advertisement, p. 300.

cards would record five kings. So the dealer still watches the needle, and when he finds that the second king of diamonds is the top card but one, he exerts the necessary pressure upon the box to widen the slit. Then, instead of withdrawing only one card two are passed out together, and placed as one upon one of the piles. This squares accounts with the case-keeper.

It may happen, of course, that when the first of the tell-cards comes to the top it would lose for the dealer. In that case he would work the 'squeeze,' and deal out the odd card with the one above it. Then he has to take his chance with the second of the duplicates, and the game becomes simply what it would be if honestly played. The advantage to the dealer resulting from the employment of the 'odd' is that it provides him with the means of winning, or at the worst prevents him from losing on one turn of the deal. This may not seem very much, but added to the chances of splits turning up it really means a great deal.

When the dealer is a proficient in sleight-of-hand he will carefully note the line of play adopted by certain 'fat' players, or, as the unenlightened would say, players who bet heavily. During the next shuffle he will put up the cards so as to cause these 'fat' men to lose, and somewhere about the middle of the pack he will place the 'odd.' Or it may be he will so arrange matters that the shuffle and the cut will bring one of the duplicate

cards about a third of the way down the pack and the other a third of the distance from the other end. Thus he will have two opportunities of withdrawing two cards at once, either of which he can use as may suit him best.

Supposing that hitherto the heaviest betting has been on the high cards, the dealer will put up the pack in such a way that only the low ones win for the players. That is to say, the cards will come out alternately high and low, the high ones falling to the bank. As the game proceeds the first of the tell-cards by degrees comes nearer and nearer the top, and the dealer looks out for the needle-tell to indicate its approach. By this time, perhaps, the players may have noticed that the high cards are losing, and therefore may have altered their play, betting now upon the low cards. If this is so, the bank will begin to lose, but not for long. When the tell-card has become the second from the top the dealer manipulates the two-card device and draws out two cards at once. The run of the game is now altered. The cards still come out alternately high and low, but the high cards now go to the players. As they have taken to betting on the low ones they lose in consequence. If, however, the players show no signs of changing their mode of betting when the first tell-card nears the top, the dealer does not alter the run of the cards, but goes straight on. When he comes to the second duplicate

card he must deal out two at once, or the 'odd' would be discovered.

The cases given above are put in the simplest form, for clearness; but it must not be imagined that anyone investigating a suspected case of cheating would find the cards arranged to come out always high and low alternately. The dealer knows better than to risk anything of that kind. He would be caught directly. The cards are merely put up in a general sort of way, so as to give a preponderance in one direction or the other; the dealer being at liberty to alter the general run of the cards at either of the two duplicates. Of course he might even have two extra cards in the pack, these and their duplicates being tell-cards. That would give him a choice of two out of four opportunities of altering the run; but the more devices he employs the greater the chances of detection. One turn in the deal is plenty. It gives the dealer all the opportunities he needs; and in the long run he is bound to win. It is said that in some 'skin' houses in New York decks of 54, 55, or even 56 cards are frequently played on soft gamblers.

It is possible for the dealer and players alike to be in a general conspiracy to cheat the bank. The dealer is not necessarily the banker. The bank may be found by anyone; the proprietor of the gambling saloon, for instance. But a dealer would be very foolish to cheat his employer. In a private game, if a dupe can be put up to

find the bank in money, that is all right for the sharps. They are, one and all, at liberty to go in and win—and they do.

The reader may be interested in knowing that in America some of the dealers who are employed by proprietors of gambling houses, or saloons as they are called, will demand a salary of four or five thousand dollars. It is said that a very expert dealer is worth that amount per annum, and that he can get it. It strikes one as being a somewhat high rate of pay for a man whose sole duty is to shuffle and deal out cards for a few hours a day, if that *is* his sole duty. Suspicious persons—and there are a few such in the world—might be tempted to believe that there is more in the dealer's duties than meets the eye, and a 'darned sight' more. Whatever opinion may be entertained upon the subject, we can all join, at any rate, in hoping for the best, and in praying for the *bettor*. Though when a man is idiot enough to lose his money, as some do day after day, in a game where his own common sense ought to tell him that he stands every chance of being cheated, he may be looked upon as a hopeless case. There is nothing that will ever knock intelligence into him, or his gambling propensities out of him. The only system of treatment that could be expected to do him any good would be a lengthened course of strait-waistcoat, to be repeated with additions upon any sign of a recurrence of the malady.

Two or three years ago an Englishman won 5,000*l.* in one year at the Cape, in a sort of rough-and-tumble game of faro. He ran the bank without either cue-cards or case-keeper, and also without a dealing-box, as in the prehistoric times in America before the losses experienced by those who 'bucked against the tiger' forced these implements into use. He dealt the cards out of his hand. The miners played against him for gold-dust and he nearly always won. His operations were of the most primitive kind. He simply had a lot of packs of cards, apparently new, but which had been opened and arranged. Some were packed for the high cards to win; some for the low ones. He would take a pack down, give it a false shuffle and begin to deal it. If he wanted to alter the run of the cards, he could at any time do so by merely dropping the top card on the floor. This he did very cleverly, and nobody noticed it, because the floor was always littered with used cards. Having no case-keeper to record the game, the missing cards were never missed. What about the poor miners? Well, they *must* have been flats if their equilibrium remained undisturbed through a lively game such as that. They deserved to lose all that the dealer won.

This sharp is now in England 'mug-hunting.' He is at present acting as bear-leader to a young man who has just come into 1,700*l.* a year. He makes most of his living at 'lumbering' and 'telling the tale,' and his stronghold

is the bottom deal. The writer has great pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness to him for much of the information as to the methods of the common English sharp. He is a swindler, but a most agreeable and gentlemanly one.

This *Faro* is a hard-hearted monarch whose constant delight appears to be a slaughter of the innocents; though one can hardly suppose that his victims are often the heirs male of Israel. Be that as it may, however, Faro's victims can hardly hope for succour from a daughter of Faro, for his only offspring are greed and fraud. And those who bow the head and bend the knee to Faro are simply ministering to these two, his children. Those who waste their substance on Faro are merely forging fetters for their own limbs, and giving themselves body and soul to a taskmaster from whose thraldom they will find it difficult to escape.

To descend from metaphor to matter of fact, there is no game which gives freer rein to the passion of gambling than faro. There is no game in which money is lost and won more readily. Above all, there is no game in which the opportunities of cheating are more numerous or more varied. If these are qualities which can recommend it to a man of common sense, call me a gambler.

CHAPTER IX

PREPARED CARDS

ALTHOUGH, in the course of our previous wanderings among what may be aptly described as 'The Groves of Blarney,' we have already encountered many examples of the various preparations used by the dwellers therein to add new beauties to their everyday requisites, there still remain some to be investigated. These philosophers, in searching for their form of the universal 'alkahest,' which turns everything they touch to gold, have contrived to learn many things, besides those we have already looked into. It behoves us, therefore, to follow in their footsteps as far as may be; and, before finally quitting the subject of playing-cards, to complete our information respecting these beautiful and—to the sharp—useful appliances.

We have seen how much may be accomplished by means of judicious preparation of the cards. That is not a discovery which can be ascribed to the present generation of sinners, or the last, or the one before that. No man can say when preparation was first 'on the cards.' Some of the devices contained in this chapter are as old

as the hills ; others are of a more recent date ; but, old or new, this book would be incomplete without some description of them. The very oldest are sometimes used even now, in out-of-the-way corners of the world, and among people who are possessors of that ignorance of sharping which is not bliss, at least if they happen to be gamblers.

One of the oldest methods of preparing cards for the purposes of cheating was by cutting them to various shapes and sizes. That this plan is still adopted the reader already knows. We have now to consider the means whereby the sharp is enabled to alter the form of the cards in any way he pleases, with neatness and accuracy.

The most primitive appliance used for the purpose is what is now known as a 'stripper-plate.' It consists of two steel bars, bolted together at each end, the length between the bolts being ample to allow a playing-card to be inserted lengthwise between the bars, and screwed up tightly. Fig. 45 illustrates a device of this kind, with a card *in situ*, ready for cutting. Across the centre of the top plate a slight groove is filed, to facilitate the insertion of the card in a truly central position. The edges of the two plates or bars are perfectly smooth, and are formed so as to

FIG. 45.

give the required curve to the card when cut. In the illustration, the side of the card when cut would become concave. The cutting is managed by simply running a sharp knife or razor along the side of the arrangement. This takes off a thin shred of the card, and, guided by the steel plates, the cut is clean and the edge of the card is in no danger of becoming jagged.

The most modern appliance of this kind, however, will be found quoted in one of the catalogues under the name of 'trimming-shears.' These shears are not necessarily cheating-tools ; they are largely used to trim the edges of faro-cards, which will not pass through the dealing-box if they are damaged. The shears for cleaning up cards in a genuine manner, however, are only required to cut them rectangularly. In the case of those used for swindling they must cut at any desired angle.

These shears consist of an oblong block of wood, into which a steel bar is sunk along one edge, carrying a bracket which supports the cutting-blade, working on a pivot at one end (fig. 46). The edge of the steel bar and the blade which works in close contact with it form respectively the lower and upper halves of the shears. Upon the upper surface of the wooden block two guide-plates are fixed, by means of thumb-screws. These plates are adjustable to any angle within certain limits, and are for the purpose of holding the cards in position whilst being cut. The guide-plates being set at the

necessary angle, the card about to be cut is pressed against them with the left hand, whilst the right brings down the knife, and cuts off one edge. Fig. 46 shows a card in the act of being cut. Each card being held against the guides while cutting, uniformity of the whole is secured. When one side of each card has had a shaving taken off, if it is desired to trim the opposite side as

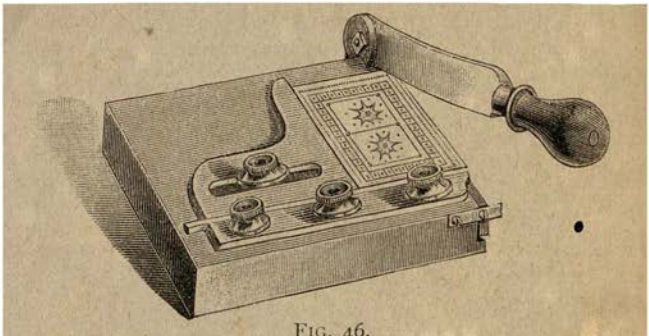

FIG. 46.

well, the guides are adjusted to give the required width, and a second cut is taken.

Shears of this kind, of course, will not cut the sides of the cards concave; but a very good substitute for convex sides may be made by taking two cuts on each side, at a very slight angle one to the other, taking more off the corners than in the centre. There is no need to impress upon the reader that the defective form of the card is not made sufficiently pronounced to be noticeable. The two cuts do not meet in the middle to form a point; the

apex of the angle, so to speak, is cut off, leaving the central portion of the side flat, and square with the ends of the card.

Square-cornered playing-cards of course will show no signs of having been trimmed in this way; but those with round corners are bound to do so, however slight a shaving may have been removed from the side. In trimming these for cheating, therefore, the sharp has to employ, in addition to the shears, what is called a 'round-corner cutter.' This is an instrument which restores the circular form of the corners, which otherwise would show the point at which the shears cut through them. It is simply a sort of punch, which cuts the corners, one at a time, into their original shape, and gives them their proper curve.

So much, then, for the tools. We have next to consider the various forms given to the cards, and the uses to which they are put when thus prepared.

The simplest device connected with cards which have been trimmed is that known as the 'large card.' As its name implies, it is a card which is left slightly larger than the rest of the pack. All the others are trimmed down, either slightly narrower or shorter, or smaller altogether. This is a very primitive dodge, and one seldom resorted to, in the ordinary way, nowadays. Its object is to give the sharp either a ready means of forcing the cut at a given point in the pack, or of making

the pass at that point, if the cut does not happen to be made in the right place. The cards being manipulated so as to arrange them according to some particular system, the large card is placed at the bottom, and then the pack is divided at about the middle, and the top half put underneath. The pack is straightened, and laid on the table to be cut. Not suspecting any trickery, it is almost certain that the dupe, in cutting, will seize hold of the large card, which is now in the centre of the pack, and cut at that point. This brings the cards again into the positions they occupied relatively at first. If the cut, however, should not happen to be made at the 'large,' the sharp has to make the pass, and bring that card once more to the bottom. No modern sharp of any standing would use such a palpable fraud, even among the most innocent of his dupes. It is a long way behind the times, and was out of date years ago.

Another form of card which at one time was largely used, but which has become too well-known to be of much service, is the 'wedge.' Wedges are cards which have been cut narrower at one end than the other, the two long sides inclining towards each other at a slight angle. The cards when cut in this way, and packed with all the broad ends looking the same way, cannot be distinguished from those which are perfectly square; but when some are placed one way and some the other, there is no difficulty in telling 'which is which.' Before these

cards became commonly known, they must have proved very useful to the sharp. If he wished to force the cut at any particular place, he had only to place the two halves of the pack in opposite directions, and the cut was pretty sure to be made at the right point. If he wished to distinguish the court cards from the others, all he had to do was to turn them round in the pack, so that their broad ends faced the other way. If he wished to be sure of making the pass at any card, by just turning the wide end of that card to the narrow ends of the others he could always feel where it was, without looking at it. In fact, the utility of such cards was immense, but it has long been among the things that were. Now, the first thing a tiro in sleight-of-hand will do, on being asked to examine a pack of cards, is to cut them and turn the halves end for end, to see if they are 'wedges.' Needless to say, they never are.

The only case in which it is at all possible to use cards of this kind at the present day is in a very, very 'soft' game of faro, where the players do not ask permission to examine the pack. The dealer has the sole right of shuffling and cutting the cards; therefore if he has the opportunity of using wedges, nothing is easier than to have all the high cards put one way, and the low ones the other. Then in shuffling he can put up the high cards to lose or win, and, in fact, arrange the pack in any manner he likes. There is very little

safety, however, in the use of wedges at any time. Practical men would laugh at the idea of employing them.

The concave and convex cards cut by means of the stripper-plates, described earlier in this chapter, are still in use to a limited extent. The common English sharp employs them in connection with a game called 'Banker.' He 'readies up the broads,' as he terms it, by cutting all the high cards convex, and the low ones concave. There is also another game known as 'Black and Red,' in which the cards of one colour are convex, and the other colour concave.

The most commonly used form of cards, however, is that of the 'double-wedges' or 'strippers,' cut by means of the trimming-shears, and which have been already described. The name of 'strippers' is derived from the operation which these cards are principally intended to facilitate, and which consists of drawing off from the pack, or 'stripping,' certain cards which are required for use in putting up hands. Suppose the sharp is playing a game of poker, and, naturally, he wishes to put up the aces for himself, or for a confederate. He cuts the aces narrow at each end, and all the other cards of the same width as the ends of the aces. This leaves the sides of the aces bulging out slightly from the sides of the pack, and enables him to draw them all out with one sweep of his fingers during the shuffle. Then they

are placed all together, at the bottom of the pack, and can be put up for deal or draft, or they may be held out until required.

'End-strippers' are a variety of the same kind of thing, the only difference being that they are trimmed up at the ends, instead of at the sides.

It is only in England and other countries where the spread of knowledge in this direction has been limited to the sharps themselves, the general public remaining in ignorance, that strippers are employed. They would be instantly detected among people who have learnt anything at all of sharping.

Trimming is not the only method of preparing cards for cheating purposes; there are others of much greater delicacy and refinement. Witness the following, which is culled from the circular issued by one of the 'Sporting Houses':—

'*To smart poker players.*—I have invented a process by which a man is sure of winning if he can introduce his own cards. The cards are not trimmed or marked in any way, shape, or manner. They can be handled and shuffled by all at the board, and without looking at a card you can, by making two or three shuffles or ripping them in, oblige the dealer to give three of a kind to any one playing, or the same advantage can be taken on your own deal. This is a big thing for any game. In euchre you can hold the joker every time or the cards most wanted

in any game. The process is hard to detect, as the cards look perfectly natural, and it is something card-players are not looking for. Other dealers have been selling sanded cards, or cheap cards, with spermacetia rubbed on, and calling them professional playing or magnetic cards. I don't want you to class my cards with that kind of trash. I use a liquid preparation put on with rollers on all cards made; this dries on the cards and does not show, and will last as long as the cards do. The object is to make certain cards not prepared slip off easier than others in shuffling. You can part or break the deck to an ace or king, and easily "put up three," no matter where they lay in the deck. This advantage works fine single-handed, or when the left-hand man shuffles and offers the cards to be cut. These cards are ten times better than readers or strippers, and they get the money faster. Price, $2,00 per pack by mail; $20,00 per dozen packs. If you order a dozen I will furnish cards like you use.'

The gentle modesty and unassuming candour of the above effusion, its honest rectitude and perfect self-abnegation, render it a very pearl of literature. It is a pity that such a jewel should be left to hide itself away, and waste its glories upon the unappreciative few, whilst thousands might be gladdened by the sight of it and proceed on their way invigorated and refreshed. Let us bring it into the light and treasure it as it deserves.

As the talented author above quoted suggests, there are several methods of achieving the object set forth, and causing the cards to slip at any desired place, apart from the much vaunted 'liquid preparation put on with rollers' the secret of which one would think that he alone possessed. We will just glance at them all, by way of improving our minds and learning all that is to be learnt.

The earliest method of preparing a pack of cards in this way certainly had the merit of extreme simplicity, in that it consisted of nothing more than putting the pack, for some time previous to its use, in a damp place. This system had the further advantage that it was not even necessary to open the wrapper in which the cards came from the maker. When the cards had absorbed a certain amount of moisture, it was found that the low cards would slip much more easily than the court cards. The reason for this was, that the glaze used in 'bringing up the colours' of the inks used in printing contained a large proportion of hygroscopic or gummy matter, which softened more or less upon becoming moist. The court cards, having a much greater part of their faces covered with the glaze than the others, were more inclined to cling to the next card, in consequence. Therefore the task of distinguishing them was by no means severe.

Not satisfied with this somewhat uncertain method, however, the sharps set to work to improve upon it. The

next departure was in the direction of making the smooth cards smoother, and the rough ones more tenacious. The upshot of this was that those cards which were required to slip were lightly rubbed over with soap, and those which had to cling were treated with a faint application of rosin. This principle has been the basis of all the 'new and improved' systems that have been put before the sharping public ever since. Either something is done to the cards to make them slip, or they are prepared with something to keep them from slipping.

When the unglazed 'steam-boat' cards were much in use the 'spermacetia' system, referred to in the paragraph quoted a little while ago, was a very pretty thing indeed, and worked well. The cards which it was necessary to distinguish from the others were prepared by rubbing their backs well with hard spermaceti wax. They were then vigorously scoured with some soft material, until they had acquired a brilliant polish. Cards treated in this manner, when returned again to the pack, would be readily separable from the others. By pressing rather heavily upon the top of the pack, and directing the pressure slightly to one side, it would be found that the pack divided at one of the prepared cards. That is to say, the cards above the prepared one would cling together and slide off, leaving the doctored one at the top of the remainder.

With glazed cards, if they are required to slip, the

backs are rubbed with a piece of waxed tissue paper, thus giving them an extra polish ; but the better plan is to slightly roughen the backs of all the others. They may be 'sanded,' as in the case of those used for the sand-tell faro-box. This simply means that the backs are rubbed with sand-paper. In reality, it is fine emery-paper that is used ; any sand-paper would be too coarse, and produce scratches.

There still remains to be considered the method of causing the cards to cling, by the application of that marvellous master-stroke of inventive genius, the 'liquid preparation,' as advertised. It may be hoped that the reader will not feel disappointed on learning what it is. The wonderful compound is nothing more or less than very thin white hard varnish. That is all. It may be applied 'with rollers,' or otherwise, just as the person applying it may prefer. The fact of certain cards being treated with this varnish renders them somewhat 'tacky,' and inclined to stick together ; not sufficiently, however, to render the effect noticeable to anyone who is not looking for it. But, by manipulating the pack as before directed in the case of the waxed cards, the slipping will occur at those cards whose backs have not been varnished. The instructions sent out with the cards mentioned in the advertisement will be found reprinted at p. 304 ; therefore, since it would be presumptuous to think of adding anything to advice emanating from the great authority

himself, we may leave him to describe the use of his own wares.

Having thus said all that is necessary to give the reader sufficient information for his guidance in any case of sharping with which he may be brought into contact, we may bring this chapter to a close; and, in so doing, conclude all that has to be said upon the subject of cheating at cards. We have been compelled to dwell somewhat at length upon matters which are associated with cards and card-games only, because so large a proportion of the sharping which goes on in the world is card-sharping. Almost everyone plays cards, and so many play for money. Therefore, the sharp naturally selects that field which affords him the widest scope and the most frequent opportunities for the exercise of his calling. Card-sharping has been reduced to a science. It is no longer a haphazard affair, involving merely primitive manipulations, but it has developed into a profession in which there is as much to learn as in most of the everyday occupations of ordinary mortals.

With this chapter, then, we take a fond farewell of cards, for the present; and having said 'adieu,' we will turn our attention to other matters.

CHAPTER X

DICE

WITH this chapter we strike out into fresh territory. We have passed through the land of those who trust their fortunes to the turn of the card, and arrive now among the aborigines, whose custom is to stake their worldly possessions upon the hazard of the die. As to which custom is the more commendable of the two, it is somewhat difficult to decide. They are both 'more honoured in the breach than the observance.' Readily, as we have seen, the innocent pieces of pasteboard are made to serve the purposes of cheating; and no less readily are the tiny cubes of ivory or celluloid falsified, and made the instruments of dishonesty.

This of course is no secret. The name of 'loaded dice' is familiar to all; but it is the name alone which is familiar; the things themselves are, to the vast majority of mankind, absolutely unknown. In some respects it is quite as well that it should be so; but it is far better that these things should be generally understood, and that the signs and tokens of their existence and their employment should be known to all. In this chapter then, we shall

deal with the subject in its entirety, describing the different systems of cheating, and some of the so-called games to which these methods are applied.

Broadly speaking, cheating at dice may be classed under two heads—the manipulation of genuine dice, and the employment of unfair ones. From this it will be gathered that the 'loaded dice,' so often spoken of, are by no means necessary to the sharp who has made this line of business his speciality. Loaded dice, in fact, are very puerile contrivances, compared with some of the devices which are about to be brought to the reader's notice. They are one of the landmarks of cheating, it is true ; but they are not the high-watermark, by any means. The modern sharp has to a great extent risen above them, although they are still useful to him at times. They have one very great defect—they will not 'spin' properly ; and that militates very greatly against their use, in circles where the players are at all 'fly.'

We will first devote our attention to the means of cheating with fair dice ; and the reader will learn that the thing which may have appeared to him as being difficult of accomplishment is really a very simple matter indeed. This branch of the art is known to its professors as 'securing,' and consists of a plan of retaining certain dice. One is held against the inside edge of the box, whilst the other is allowed to fall freely into it. In this way one of the dice is not shaken at all, and falls on the table in

the same position as it previously occupied. In order that this may be accomplished satisfactorily, it is necessary to use a suitable dice-box ; therefore, we will inspect one of the kind generally used by professional dice-players in this country. Before proceeding further, however, it may be as well to inform the reader that the information

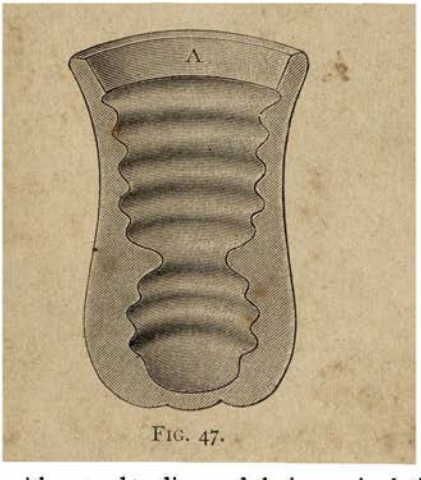

FIG. 47.

here given, with regard to dice and their manipulation, has been had upon the authority of one of the leading English sharps, and may be said to fairly represent the present state of the science.

The dice-box referred to above is illustrated in section in fig. 47. It is simply the usual form, with the interior corrugated to insure the thorough turning about of the dice. The only preparation in connection with it is that

the flat inside rim or lip, marked 'A' in the figure, is roughened by rubbing it with coarse glass-paper. This gives it a kind of 'tooth,' which prevents the dice from slipping when they are 'secured' against it.

A box of this kind being to hand, nothing further in the way of apparatus is required for the operation of securing. All else depends entirely upon practice. As the dice are taken from the table one of them is secured, and the others are thrown into the box. An expert will use three dice, securing one and letting the others go, but it requires some skill to pick up three dice in the proper manner and without fear of dropping them all. Therefore a novice will use only two. The process is carried out as follows :—

The dice are laid upon the table side by side. The one farthest from the operator is placed with the ace uppermost, consequently the six is upon the face which lies on the table. This is the die which is about to be secured. The first two fingers of the right hand are now laid flat upon the dice, and between these two fingers the dice are taken up by their right-hand edges.

Thus :—

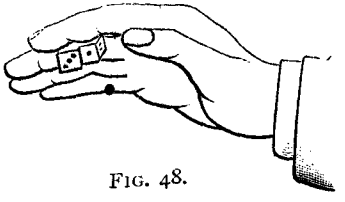

FIG. 48.

They are now pushed well home by the thumb :—

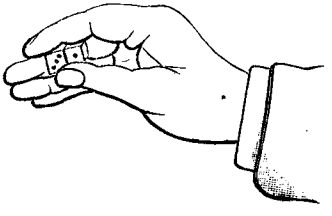

FIG. 49.

The die nearest the operator is now allowed to fall into the dice-box, whilst the other is retained :—

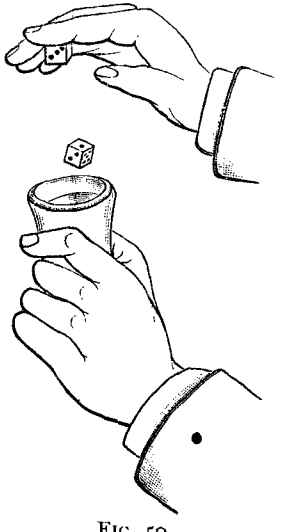

FIG. 50.

The box is next taken in the right hand, the fingers lying flat over the mouth of it, and the thumb holding it at the bottom.

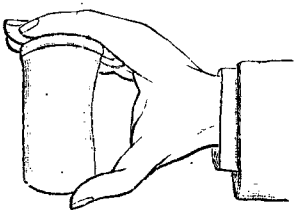

FIG. 51.

In the act of closing the fingers of the right hand over the box, the die which has been retained is firmly pressed between the second finger and the inside edge of the box. In this position it is completely hidden by the forefinger, and is there held whilst the box is shaken. If the forefinger were raised the die would appear situated in this manner :—

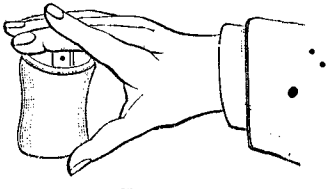

FIG. 52.

The sharp, however, is particularly careful *not* to raise his forefinger ; that is not 'in the piece' at all. The

box is now shaken, and of course the die which is not secured is heard to rattle within it. Finally, the hand is turned round so that the mouth of the box is downwards and the backs of the fingers rest upon the table.

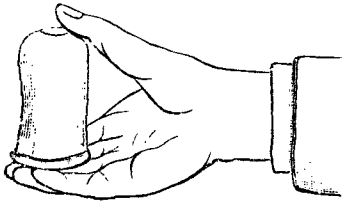

FIG. 53.

After the box has thus been turned upside down, then comes the crucial point of the whole operation. If the fingers are not carefully removed the secured die will not fall upon the face intended. The proper method of 'boxing' the dice upon the table is to remove the fingers in the following order. Firstly, the second and third fingers are opened, allowing the loose die to fall upon the table. Then the first and second fingers are gently opened, easing the secured die, as it were, into its position of rest. Lastly, the forefinger is moved to the edge of the box, at the same time withdrawing the second finger entirely, and the box is let down over the two dice. It is immediately lifted up and the score is recorded. There is nothing at all suspicious in any of these movements; they are quite the usual thing, or appear so when

quickly performed, the only difference between the genuine shake and the false being the retention of the one die. Of course, it is necessary that the entire operation should occupy the least possible time, the hands being kept somewhat low and the dupe seated upon the right-hand side of the operator.

The secured die naturally falls with the six uppermost, whilst the loose one cannot show less than one. Therefore the sharp cannot throw less than seven with two dice. That is the lowest score possible for him to make, whilst the dupe may throw only 'two.' Now, in an infinite number of throws with two dice 'seven' is the number of pips which will be the average for each throw. Sometimes, of course, only two pips will be thrown; sometimes both sixes will come uppermost, making twelve pips together. But with one die secured in such a manner as to fall six, the average of an infinite number of throws is necessarily very much increased, because it is impossible to throw less than seven. The chances of the two players bear no comparison, and the dupe is bound to be beaten. For instance, the chances of throwing twelve by the player who secures one die are as one to six—that is to say, they are six to one against him, whilst the chances against the player who goes to work fairly are *thirty-five to one.* This will serve to give the reader some idea of the value of one secured die out of two in use.

Passing on to the use of unfair dice, we find that

there are three kinds employed at the present day. Firstly, there are those whose faces do not bear the correct number of pips, and which are known as 'dispatchers.' Secondly, we have those which are weighted at one side, and tend to fall with that side downwards, such being the well-known 'loaded dice.' Lastly, there is the variety bearing the name of 'electric dice,' which are the most modern development in this department of cheating. We will take the varieties seriatim.

1. *Dispatchers.*—These are of two kinds, called 'high' and 'low' respectively, in accordance with the fact of their having an aggregate of pips either higher or lower than should be the case. They owe their origin to the fact that it is impossible to see more than three sides of a cube at one time. In making a high dispatcher, then, any three adjacent sides are taken and marked with two, four, and six pips respectively. That side of the cube which is immediately opposite to the one with six pips, instead of being marked with one, as it should be, is marked six also. The side opposite the four is marked four, and that opposite the two is marked two in a similar manner. Therefore, no two sides which bear the same number of pips are ever seen at one time, the duplicate marks being always on opposite sides of the die. In a low dispatcher the process is precisely the same, but the sides are numbered with one, two and

three pips, instead of two, four, and six. It is evident, then, that a high dispatcher cannot throw less than two, whilst a low one cannot throw higher than three. Therefore, if the sharp throws with one genuine die and one high dispatcher, he cannot throw less than three, and the chances are 17·5 to 1 against his throwing anything so low. If, in addition to using a high dispatcher himself, he gives his dupe a low one[1] and a genuine die to use, the throw of the two dice cannot be higher than nine, and the chances are 17·5 to 1 against its being so high. In fact, in an infinite number of throws, the sharp will average over thirty per cent. better than his opponent. This being the case it is obvious that the game can only go in one way, and that way is not the dupe's.

2. *Loaded dice.*—These commodities are found to be thus described in one of the price-lists :—

'*Loaded dice.*—Made of selected ivory loaded with quicksilver, and can be shaken from the box so as to come high or low, as you wish. With a set of these you will find yourself winner at all dice games, and carry off the prize at every raffle you attend. Sold in sets of nine dice, three high, three low, and three fair. Price per set, complete, $5.00.'

These are the most superior kind of loaded dice.

[1] This would be far too risky a proceeding for a sharp to indulge in as a rule. He *might* do so, however, if he got hold of a very great flat.

They are made by drilling out two adjacent spots or pips at one edge of the die, filling in the cavity with mercury, and cementing it up fast. The commoner description of these things are made by filling the holes with lead instead of mercury.

As before mentioned, these dice have the disadvantage that they will not spin upon one corner as genuine ones will; consequently a person who suspects that they are being used can easily discover the fact, if he is knowing enough to try them. This defect led to the invention of the third kind of false dice, which we are about to investigate.

3. *Electric dice.*—These will be found quoted in one of the catalogues, together with the special tables to be used with them.

The dice themselves are made of celluloid, and their construction will be readily understood with the aid of the illustration given at fig. 54. The first operation in making dice of this kind is to bore out a cylindrical cavity almost completely through the die, the mouth of this cavity being situated upon the face of the die which will bear the six pips, and the bottom almost reaching to the opposite face, upon which is the ace.

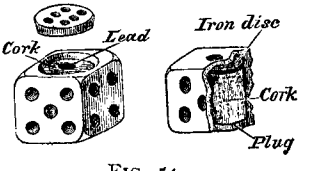

FIG. 54.

At the bottom of the cavity, and consequently immediately within the die above the single pip or ace, is put a thin circular disc of iron. The greater part of the cavity is then filled in with cork, leaving sufficient depth for the insertion of a plug, which effectually closes up the aperture, and upon the outer side of which are marked the six pips appertaining to that face of the die. Before this plug is fastened into its place, however, a small pellet of lead, of exactly the same weight as the iron disc, is pressed into the upper surface of the cork, and there fixed. Finally, the plug bearing the six pips is cemented into its place, and the die is complete. Apparently, this plug is cemented in with celluloid, the same material as that used in fabricating the die itself, and the joint is so well and neatly made that it is invisible, even though examined with a powerful lens.

The *rationale* of this construction is as follows. The iron disc and the leaden pellet, being immediately within opposite faces of the die, will exactly balance each other, and thus the die can be spun or thrown in exactly the same manner as a genuine one. The lead and iron, however, being so much heavier than the material of which the body of the die is supposed to consist, would cause the weight of the die to be very suspicious, were it not for the fact that the interior is almost entirely composed of a still lighter material—cork. Therefore, the completed die is no heavier than a genuine one of

the same size and appearance. In fact, these dice will bear the strictest examination, in every way —except one, viz. the application of a magnet.

The word magnet gives the key to the employment of these so-called electric dice. The technical reader will at once grasp the idea thus embodied, and will need no further description of the details of working. For the benefit of those who are unacquainted with electricity and its phenomena, however, it is necessary to explain the nature of an electro-magnet. If a bar of soft iron is surrounded by a helix of insulated copper wire, and a current of electricity is passed through that wire, the iron instantly becomes converted into a magnet for the time being. But directly the contact at one end of the wire is broken, and the current is for that reason no longer permitted to flow, the iron loses its magnetism and resumes its normal condition. If, therefore, a bar of this kind is connected with a battery in such a way that the current can be controlled by means of a push, similar to those used in connection with electric bells, the otherwise inert bar of iron can be converted into a magnet at any instant, and allowed to resume its former state at will.

Now, the table with which these electric dice are used is so constructed that, immediately below its surface and within the thickness of the wood itself, there are concealed several electro-magnets such as have been

described. At some convenient spot in the table, at the back of a drawer or elsewhere, the battery supplying the current is hidden. The key or push controlling the current takes the form of a secret spring in the table-leg, so placed as to be within easy access of the operator's knee.

The result, then, is obvious. Among the dice in use are one or more of the 'electric' variety. When the dupe throws them, he has to take his chance as to how they will fall, and as long as the sharp is winning he will do the same. *But* directly he begins to lose, or to find that he is not winning fast enough to please him, the sharp presses the secret spring with his knee when it is his turn to throw, and—click !—the false dice turn up 'sixes.' The magnets, of course, attract the iron discs, drawing them on to the table, and the sixes being upon the opposite sides of the dice naturally fall uppermost. The operator has only to trouble himself with regard to two points—he must press the spring at the right moment, and release it before trying to pick up the dice afterwards. Should he neglect this latter point, he will have the satisfaction of finding the dice stick to the table. In all other respects, he has only to 'press the button,' and electricity will 'do the rest.'

The publication of this book, however, will once and for all render the use of electric dice unsafe under any conditions. The moment the outer world has any

idea of their existence, the game is too risky to be pleasant to any sharp. A little mariner's compass, dangling at the end of a stranger's watch chain, or carried secretly, will serve to reveal in an instant the true nature of the deception which is being practised upon him by his host. It is sad that the diffusion of knowledge should be accompanied by such untoward consequences ; but we can hardly hope that the sharps will die of disappointment or despair, even though dice were undoubtedly doomed to detection and disaster, and had dwindled into disuse. (Alliteration is the curse of modern literature.)

Unfair dice are seldom submitted for inspection, as may well be imagined, particularly those of the dispatcher kind. The greatest donkey in existence would at once find that the number of pips upon the faces of these latter was incorrect. Therefore they are always introduced into the game whilst the play is occupying the dupe's undivided attention, and the manner of their introduction is that embodied in the process known as 'ringing-in.' This is done at the moment when the dice are taken up in order to throw them into the box. It is only possible to change one die, the others are allowed to fall into the box in the usual way.

Supposing that two dice are being used, two fair ones will be employed, and with these the dupe will throw. The sharp, however, has a false die concealed in his

right hand, and held in the thumb joint. He picks up the two fair dice from the table, in the manner described in 'securing,' and allows one of them to fall into the box.

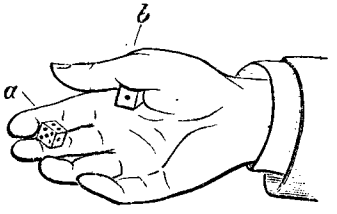

FIG. 55.

Then, of course, he has still two dice in his hand, one genuine one between his fingers, and one false one held by his thumb. In figs. 55 and 56, *a* is the genuine die and *b* is the false one.

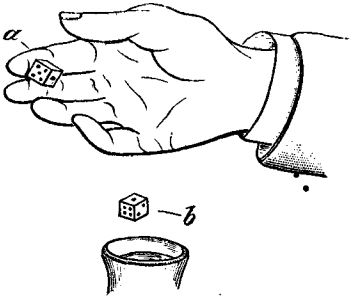

FIG. 56.

At the same instant that the first die is allowed to fall, the false die *b* is dropped into the box also (fig. 56).

Immediately the false die is released the two fingers holding the second genuine one are turned inwards (fig. 57), and the die is taken into the thumb-joint, in the position formerly occupied by the false one. The whole of this manipulation is performed in the act of throwing the dice into the box. The false die is dropped into the box, and the genuine one put into its place at the root of the thumb in one movement only, and the exchange is instantaneous. The fingers are well bent before any of the dice are dropped, so that the second genuine die has the least possible distance to travel in its movement towards the thumb-joint.

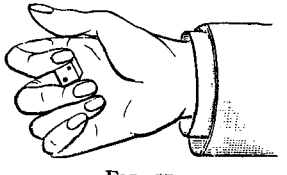

FIG. 57.

From the manipulations outlined above, the reader will observe that the skill required is less in the case of dice than in that of cards ; but he must not run away with the idea that, because the methods of swindling with dice are comparatively simple, the dice-sharp requires but little practice to enable him to carry out his operations successfully. That is by no means the case. It is frequently the amateur's lot to find that those things which appear simplest in theory are the most difficult in practice. The sharp who seeks his fortune by manipulation of the 'ivories' has to devote many weary hours to

the acquisition of deftness in the manœuvres which he intends to employ.

We may now proceed to consider the application of the foregoing principles to the purposes of cheating, and see how they are employed in actual practice. In this we cannot do better than follow the sharp's operations in connection with one or two games which are commonly played. This will serve to give the reader a more adequate conception of the manner in which this style of cheating is conducted. The games selected for this purpose, then, are: 'Over and under seven,' 'Yankee-grab' or 'Newmarket,' 'Sweat,' and 'Hazard.'

Over and under seven.—This is a game which is played with a 'layout,' or painted cloth, upon which the players place their stakes. The form most generally used is divided in the following manner:—

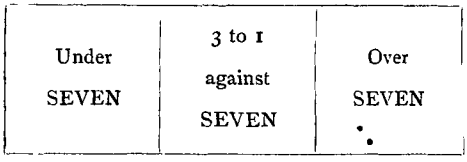

FIG. 58.

The players having placed their stakes upon either of the three divisions they may individually choose, the 'banker' shakes two dice in the box and throws them out upon the table. If the throw proves to be over seven, those players who have put their money upon 'over

seven' in the layout receive the amount of their stakes, whilst those who have bet upon the other squares will lose to the banker. In the same way, if the throw is under seven the players who have backed 'under seven' will win. If, however, the throw should prove to be exactly seven, those players who have staked upon the centre square of the layout will receive three times the amount of their stakes. A little reflection will show that even in a fair game, if players can be found to back the '3 to 1 against seven' square, the bank has a large percentage of the chances of the game in its favour. Indeed, in an infinite number of throws, the banker stands to win two-fifths of all the money staked upon the centre square. The chances against seven turning up are really 5 to 1, and not 3 to 1.

Cheating at this game may be done either by the banker or the players, although at first sight it would appear that the players can have no opportunities for cheating the bank as they have nothing to do with handling the dice. When the bank cheats the players the methods employed are as follows. The banker notes the disposition of the bets upon the layout and reckons up the amounts upon the various squares. His policy, of course, is to let that square win which has the least staked upon it. If he can always do this his gains must obviously be always greater than his losses. If the 'under seven' division has the least stakes he will secure

one of the dice to fall with the ace uppermost. Then the throw must prove to be either seven or under. If the division of the layout which has least money on it is the 'over seven,' a die is secured in such a manner as to fall with the six uppermost, and in this case the throw must be either seven or over. If the bets upon both 'under' and 'over' squares are equal he has no need to trouble, as he can neither win nor lose with those squares. If either of them turns up, the money simply passes across the table from one side to the other, whilst the bank takes whatever may have been staked upon the centre square. Even though the players always staked an amount which should equalise the bets upon the 'over' and 'under' divisions, they would lose to the bank one fifth of their stakes in the long run because the seven would turn up on the average once in six times, and then those two divisions would both lose.

The banker always shakes the box quietly, so as not to give any indication of the fact that only one die is rattling about within it. At the same time he keeps up a running fire of remarks such as, 'Any more?' 'Over wins!' 'Under pays the over,' 'The little seven wins!' &c. This is the approvedly professional way of conducting the game, all others are spurious imitations, and cannot be recognised by true 'sports.'

Another method of cheating the players is to ring in a loaded die which will fall six. If the highest

betting is found to be over seven, this die is secured so that it shall fall ace uppermost, and then the throw can only be seven or under. If on the other hand the highest betting is 'under seven,' the dice are simply shaken without securing, and the result must be seven or over. If there is heavy betting upon the 'seven' or central division of the layout a two or a three is secured upon the genuine die, and this will make the throw necessarily over seven. As a rule, however, the central or '3 to 1 against' square does not require much attention from the sharp. The chances are always five to three in his favour. If the players persistently bet upon the high square of the layout, the sharp will justering in a loaded die that falls with the ace up, to save himself trouble. When this is done, the throw can manifestly never be *over* seven.

In cases where the players cheat the bank, it generally happens that the banker is not a professional, but a novice who has been put up or persuaded to accept the position for the time being. A party of sharps will always get a 'mug' to take the bank if they can. Securing, in an instance of this kind, is impossible; the cheating must be done by contriving to introduce into the game either a dispatcher or a loaded die. The latter is the safer thing to do, because a dispatcher will not bear even a moment's attentive examination. The ringing-in is done by officiously picking up the dice for

the next throw, tossing them carelessly into the box, and handing the whole over to the banker. If well done, the exchange is imperceptible, and it is highly improbable that it will be noticed. The bets, of course, will be made according to the nature of the die which has been rung in. If it is made to fall high, the bets are put upon the 'over seven' division; if it falls low, they are put on 'under seven.' Naturally, the players allow the bank to win occasionally, in order to avoid suspicion. Finally, and before quitting the game, a genuine die is rung in, replacing the false one. There are not many chances in favour of the bank with this method of playing.

Yankee-grab or Newmarket.—This game is played with three dice, and the object in view is to get nearest to an aggregate of eighteen pips; or in the English Colonies, where the 'ace' or single pip counts seven, to throw the nearest to twenty-one. Each player has three throws. At the first throw he picks out the highest number thrown, and puts that die aside. Then he throws with the two remaining dice, puts aside the higher as before, and throws again with the remaining one. The number thrown this last time, together with the numbers shown by the dice which have been put aside from the two former throws, will constitute that player's score. This is done by all the players in rotation, and the highest score wins all the stakes. Any player may, however, elect to throw with one die only for each throw if he chooses.

Cheating at this game is obviously easy. It may be done either by securing, by the use of loaded dice, or by ringing in dispatchers. It is of course necessary to have some means of distinguishing the dispatchers from the fair dice if the cheating is done by those means. In picking up the dice from the table, the sharp whose turn it is to throw will change one of them for a high dispatcher. When the throw is made, the false die is very likely to be the highest ; but if it is not, so much the better for the sharp, as he has it available for the next throw. Supposing it to be the highest, he will apparently toss it carelessly aside, but in reality, he changes it again for the genuine die which has meanwhile been held in his thumb-joint. The genuine die is turned over to show the same value as that given by the dispatcher in the throw. The other players will not mind the careless handling of the die, as the value has already been called ; the only object in putting the dice on one side being to act as markers, and prevent any dispute as to the value of the previous throws. The same thing is done in the succeeding throws ; the dispatcher going into the box all three times. At the conclusion of the throws, the false die is exchanged for the genuine one it has replaced for the time being.

If the sharp prefers to use securing instead of false dice, he may secure a six upon one die at each of the first two throws ; but the third throw must be left to chance. If the last die were to be secured, there would

be none left to rattle in the box. A case has been known where a man even secured the last die ; but he had an arrangement sewn into his coat-sleeve, to counterfeit the noise made by the die in the box.

In using loaded dice at Yankee-grab, the best plan is to have three which will all fall 'sixes.' In order to avoid the suspicion which must inevitably be created by the fact of the three dice turning up six each at the first throw, a low number is secured upon one of them in the first and second throws. This puts the other players off the scent, at the same time insuring three sixes for the sharp. This is a very ingenious expedient

A good way of finishing a game, where the sharp has been securing and where the dupe has had ample opportunities of assuring himself that only fair dice are being used, is for the sharp to palm a dispatcher in the right hand, and deliver himself thus :—'My dear fellow, you have lost a lot.' (Here he pats the dupe on the shoulder with the hand which has the dispatcher palmed within it.) 'I will tell you what I will do. I will go double or quits with you, on three throws each, with one die.' The dupe usually jumps at the chance of thus winning back what he has lost ; the sharp rings in his dispatcher, and of course the 'mug' loses.

In using a dispatcher the sharp always puts the box down with the left hand ; this leaves his right hand free to ring the changes. Whatever manipulation he may be engaged

upon, he does everything slowly, easily, and deliberately. When tossing the selected die on one side after a throw and ringing in a square one to replace the loaded die or dispatcher, he takes care of course to turn it with the same side up that the other fell. This prevents any dispute as to the score, when all three throws have been made. At all times he gauges the mental calibre of his dupe, and operates in the manner which is most likely to be successful. Above all, he never neglects the golden rule of his profession—'Always work on the square as long as you are winning.'

Sweat.—This is a game which is almost as charmingly artistic as its name, and one which is particularly lovely for the banker. It also has the merit of extreme simplicity, and although cheating is hardly necessary as a rule, still there are times when it may be resorted to with great profit to the sharp. It is played with a layout arranged in the following manner :—

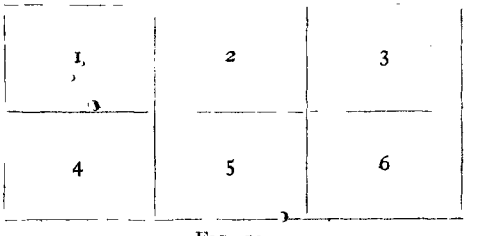

FIG. 59.

The banker shakes up three dice in the box, and the

numbers thrown win for the players. Those who have staked their money upon the numbers which have turned up receive the amount of their stakes ; the bank takes all that has been laid upon the figures not represented in the throw. If two dice fall with the same number uppermost, those who have staked upon that number will receive twice the amount of their bets. If all three dice turn up the same, that number is paid three times over.

It does not require a great mathematician to see that even at the best of times there is an overwhelming percentage of the chances in favour of the banker. It is five to three that he wins any individual bet ; the player has only three chances—those provided by the three dice, whilst the bank has the chances resting upon the remaining five squares of the layout.

If we suppose, for example, that the bets upon all the squares are of an equal amount, which is just about the most unfortunate arrangement for the banker, the worst that can happen to him is that all three dice turn up differently. Then the players who have staked upon the winning numbers will receive the stakes of those who have lost, the bank gaining and losing nothing. If two of the dice turn up the same number, the banker receives four shillings, say, and pays three. If all three dice turn up the same, he pays three shillings and receives five.

Cheating is introduced into this game by the banker in the case of a player persistently backing a high number

time after time, the method being to ring in a dispatcher which will fall low. This will materially lessen the player's chances. If in addition to this a low number is secured upon one of the other dice, the chances against the player become five to one. If the player should happen to be backing a low number, of course a high dispatcher would be used and a high number secured upon the other die.

Hazard.—This is a game in which the electric dice are particularly useful to the sharp. It is played with four dice, only two of which, however, are used at one time. The player has the option of throwing with any two of the dice, or exchanging them for the other two whenever he pleases. There are two kinds of throws which must be specially mentioned in connection with this game, viz. those which are called respectively 'crabs' and 'nicks.' A player is said to throw a crab when the dice turn up either 'pair sixes,' 'pair aces,' or 'deuce and ace.' These throws instantly lose the stakes or 'set-money.' A nick is thrown when the aggregate number of pips turned up amounts to eleven or seven. Either of these numbers being thrown, the player throwing wins the set-money.

Apart from a nick or a crab, the first throw made by the player is called the 'main,' and he must go on throwing until one of three things happens. Either he eventually throws a crab and loses, or he throws a nick, or he

throws a number corresponding to that of his main. In the event of either of the two latter events occurring, he wins the stakes. In the case of a player winning with a nick, however, he still goes on throwing; when he wins or loses in any other way, the throw passes to his opponent.

When the main is either four or ten, the chances against his throwing it again before either a nick or a crab turns up are in the ratio of two to one. Against five and nine the chances are as six to four. Against eight and six the probabilities are six to five. Obviously, then, the best main to throw is either eight or six, and if the sharp can contrive to make his main either of these two numbers, he stands a better chance of winning than one who does not. He may therefore, for instance, ring in a loaded die to fall four, and secure the other die to fall two, leaving the following throws to chance. Having thrown a main of four or ten, he might secure a six in the latter case or an ace in the former; this would render his chances of throwing the same number again about equal. The most certain method of cheating, however, and that which leaves no uncertainty as to the result, is to ring in a loaded die to fall six, and secure either an ace or a five upon the other. This obviously results in a 'nick,' and wins the set-money.

Where electric dice are used, cheating at this game is the simplest thing imaginable. One pair of dice being

made to fall six and the other one, they may be combined to give any desired result. If the sharp uses a pair, one of which will fall six and the other turn up one, the application of the current will cause him to throw a nick whenever he pleases. If he gives his dupe a pair which can be made to fall both sixes or both aces, the sharp can force his opponent to throw a crab every time if he chooses to do so. And yet there are some who will argue that science has conferred no real benefit upon humanity. Those people are certainly not sharps—they are undoubtedly flats of the first water.

Before concluding the present chapter, it behoves us to attend, for a moment, to the methods of falsification connected with that well-known little device, the 'dice-top' or 'teetotum.' It deserves just a slight mention, although the fact that it is not of great importance is evidenced by the very terse reference made to it in the various catalogues. This is what one of them says upon the subject :—

'*Dice Tops.*—For high and low. Sure thing. Made of best ivory, $4. Black walnut, just as good, $1.25.'

From even this scanty information, however, we may gather two things. Firstly, that the top can be made to fall either high or low, as required—consequently there is some trick in it ; and, secondly, that the trick, whatever it may be, does not depend upon the material of which the top is made, since black walnut is just as good as ivory.

Better, in fact, because cheaper. The little instrument itself is shown in the adjoining illustration.

Here then we have a little hexagonal top, with dice-spots upon its sides. It is spun with the thumb and finger, and the number of spots which fall uppermost in the genuine article, at the time of its running down, depends entirely upon chance. Not so, however, with the tops advertised as above. They can be made to fall in any desired manner. The spindle, instead of being fixed, as it should be, can be turned round within the body of the top. Attached to one side of the spindle, within the top, and revolving when the spindle is turned, there is a small weight which can be set to face either of the sides. The side opposite which the weight is allowed to remain is the one which will lie upon the table when the top comes to rest.

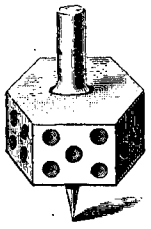

FIG. 60.

These teetotums are largely used in the States to 'spin for drinks,' and a very favourite way of working them is as follows. A man will enter some bar-whilst the bar-keeper is alone, custom being slack. He produces one of the little articles referred to, and having initiated the bar-keeper into its capabilities, induces him to purchase it. In all probability the bar-keeper sets to work with his new toy, and wins many a drink in the course of the next few weeks. After awhile, however, two accomplices

of the man who 'traded' the top will present themselves at the bar, pretending to be more or less intoxicated. Naturally, the bar-keeper thinks he has a safe thing, and tries the dice-top upon them. They lose a few bets, then pretend to lose their temper, and want to bet heavily upon the results given by the top. To this, of course, their dupe has not the least objection; he is only too ready to fall in with their views. But in the meantime, one of them, under pretence of examining the top slightly, contrives to ring in another of exactly similar appearance, but which is set to fall low when the spindle is turned to face in the same direction as that given to the other when intended to throw high. The bar-keeper thus falls an easy victim to the snare. Turn the spindle as he may, the top absolutely refuses to fall in the direction he requires.

This, then, exhausts all we have to consider with reference to dice and their manipulation. If we have not learnt very much in this branch of the art of cheating, it is because there is not very much to learn. Simple as the devices are in this kind of sharping, they are largely utilised, even at the present day, and notwithstanding the fact that 'palming' and kindred methods of concealing small articles are so generally understood. The great point in the sharp's favour, in this as in all other manipulations, is that his dupes are not expecting trickery, and consequently do not look for

it. It is highly probable that as much money has changed hands over games of dice as in connection with any other form of gambling, horse-racing, perhaps, excepted. Years ago, of course, the dice-box was a much more familiar object than at the present day; still even now it flourishes with undiminished vitality in many parts of the world. Well, those who deal with the dice will always pay dearly for experience, which may be bought *too* dearly sometimes. *Caveat emptor.*

CHAPTER XI

HIGH-BALL POKER

THE game of 'high-ball poker' is one which is essentially American, both in origin and character. It is somewhat simpler than the proper game, but possesses no particular advantages over poker, as played with cards, beyond the fact of its comparative simplicity. On the other hand, the appliances required for playing it are more expensive, and not nearly so convenient. Possibly the original idea of its introduction arose from the fact that the fraudulent manipulation of the cards, in the other game, had become notorious, and it was hoped that this kind of thing would be obviated by using balls instead. It is far more likely, however, that this variety of the game presented certain advantages to the sharp which the other did not possess, and hence its popularity in certain quarters. It would be unwise, however, to hazard an opinion one way or the other. All we need trouble ourselves about is that cheating at this game is both simple and tolerably safe. No special skill is required on the part of the sharp, and very little special apparatus, to enable

him to win whenever he pleases, and as long as he can get people to play with him.

The game is played with a leathern bottle, something like those used in 'pool,' but smaller in the neck. Into this bottle are put twenty-four balls about an inch in diameter, each of which is numbered upon a facet, the numbers running from one to twenty-four consecutively. The players sit round the table, and the bets are arranged in the same manner as at poker. The player whose turn it is to deal shakes up the balls in the bottle, and deals one to each player, himself included, no player being allowed to see the balls which are dealt to the others. The players look at the balls they have received, each one noting the number which has fallen to him, and coming in or declining to play accordingly, stake their bets. This being done, a second ball is dealt to each player, and the two balls thus received constitute his hand. The betting now proceeds as at poker, the rules being precisely the same, except that the balls rank according to their numerical value, and that the complications arising from 'pairs,' 'threes,' 'fours,' and 'flushes,' cannot arise. Those who have bad hands will fall out of the game for the time being, sacrificing the stakes they have put into the pool, whilst those who consider their hands good enough to bet on will remain in and 'raise' each other. If one player can so increase the stakes as to drive all the others out, he will take the pool

without showing his hand; or a player may be 'called,' and then the hands are shown, the best one winning the whole of the stakes.

The reader will perceive that cheating might be practised in connection with this game in a variety of ways. The dealer, in putting the balls into the bottle, might contrive to secrete a high number, which could be held out for a time, and afterwards rung in to his own hand, in place of a low one. In a conspiracy of two or three players, nothing could be easier than for them to signal to each other the value of their hands, and thus arrive at a fairly approximate knowledge of what hands they might have to contend with. They could then act in accordance with the information thus gained, and either stand out or raise the other players, as the nature of their hands may dictate. If, in addition to this, each of the conspirators was provided with duplicates of two or three of the highest numbers, the one who had the best hand could substitute for the lower number in his hand the highest number in either of the hands held by his accomplices, and thus, in all probability, constitute himself the winner, the accomplice meanwhile substituting his best number for that discarded by his partner in the conspiracy. They would not require many duplicate balls each; just two or three of the highest numbers would be quite sufficient.

There are, however, great objections to any manipu-

lation of this kind; more particularly since cheating can be accomplished, by mechanical means, in a much more simple and effective manner. The method of cheating usually adopted, therefore, takes the form of a 'bottle-holdout,' which can be caused to retain any of the

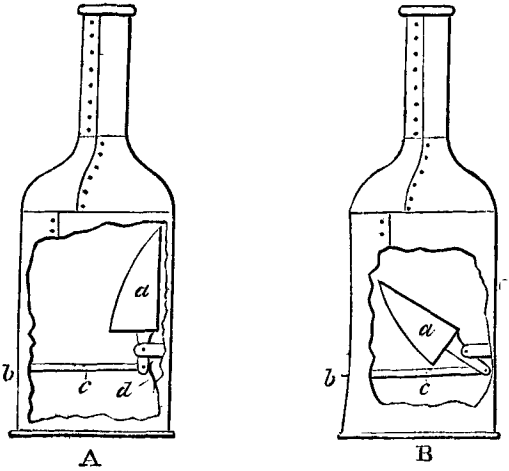

FIG. 61.

highest numbers and to deliver them to either of the players, at the will of the dealer.

This holdout is, of course, within the bottle itself, and is operated by pressure upon the slightly flexible sides. Fig. 61 is an illustration of a bottle of this kind, part of one side being cut away to allow the holdout to be seen. A represents the position of the various

parts at such times as the holdout may be either inoperative or containing the balls. B will serve to indicate the position they assume when the sides are pressed, and the holdout is either receiving or delivering the balls.

The holdout itself consists of a kind of scoop, pivoted to a bracket in such a way that it will either turn up against one side of the bottle, or lie open beneath the neck. This scoop *a* has a projecting tail-piece or lever, against which a spring *d* constantly presses, and retains the scoop in contact with the side of the bottle. To the end of this lever is jointed a rod *c*, the further end of which just reaches across to the opposite side of the bottle. It is obvious, then, that if the bottle is squeezed by the dealer, the pressure being applied to the point of contact with the rod, and to some point behind the bracket to which the scoop is pivoted (between *b* and *d*, in short), the end of the lever will be pressed towards the side of the bottle, and the scoop will consequently be turned down into the position shown at B. The whole of the working parts, together with the inside of the bottle, are painted black, in order to prevent any possibility of the device being seen by looking down the neck.

In returning the balls to the interior of the bottle, the dealer carefully notes their value. The low ones are allowed to fall in the proper manner, but when a high

one is dropped inside, the bottle is squeezed in the manner above indicated, the scoop comes down, and that ball therefore falls into the holdout. Then in dealing the device is utilised in the same way. The low balls are dealt to the dupes, but in the act of dealing to a confederate, or to himself, as the case may be, the bottle is pressed and high balls only are dealt. As a rule one ball only is held out.

There is not very much in this game beyond the ingenuity of the holdout employed, and the money which may be won by its means. But since the necessity of including it among the explanations given in this book is obvious, and since there is no definite section of the subject to which it can be referred, it has had to receive, however unworthily, the distinction of having a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XII

ROULETTE AND ALLIED GAMES

ROULETTE, and the various modifications of the game, which have been introduced from time to time, have all had, to a greater or less extent, a fascination for the gambler. That roulette itself still maintains a prominent place among the multitudinous methods of dissipating wealth to which gamblers are addicted, can be fully vouched for by those who have visited the gaming-tables of such a place as Monte Carlo. Despite the efforts of civilisation, 'the man that broke the bank,' or is said to have done so, is still prominent among us; but the bank that broke the man is, unfortunately, much more in evidence.

The methods of play adopted by the great gaming establishments of the world are unquestionably as fair as the nature of things will allow them to be. No man can run an establishment of any kind without profit, and the profits of these gaming-houses result from the apparently small chances in favour of the bank which are universally allowed. The fact that the *apparently*

small chances against the players as a body are not generally recognised as being in reality great, cannot be said to be the fault of the bankers themselves. They build palatial edifices, lay out luxurious gardens, pay their crowds of retainers handsome salaries, and still have profits sufficient to bring them in princely incomes, the entire expenses of the whole being defrayed at the cost of the players, and through the medium of those insignificant chances in the bank's favour. It is strange that the players cannot see it, but they do not seem to realise that it is they themselves who pay for these things; or, if they do see it, they play with the wild hope of being among the few fortunate ones and sharing in the plunder. Taken as a whole, it may be estimated that the profits of these places amount to five per cent. or over of every pound that is staked upon the tables. That is to say, every player who places a sovereign upon the green cloth puts, definitely and unmistakably, at least a shilling into the pockets of the proprietors, who have, in the long run, absolutely no risk whatever. They have merely to furnish the accessories, and the players will provide all the rest, simply paying their money to the bank and taking all the risk themselves. No player can gain at the expense of the bank; if one should happen to make his fortune at play, he can only do so by the ruin of some other player. That is the plain state of the case, and there is no getting over it.

It is not, however, with the so-called genuine gambling concerns that we have now to deal, but with the little hole-and-corner dens which may be found in various parts of the world, and particularly in the two continents of America. In such as these the roulette-table is frequently a familiar object, and very often it is not quite such a genuine piece of apparatus as it appears. Those who may not happen to be acquainted with the arrangement should understand that it is an oblong table, having a circular cavity at one end, in which the roulette revolves. The roulette (literally 'little wheel') is simply a revolving disc surrounded by a number of cavities into which a ball is allowed to roll. These cavities are numbered, and those who have staked upon the number of the particular hole into which the ball finds its way receive their stakes back, together with an amount equivalent to the money they have staked multiplied by the number of holes remaining vacant in the roulette, *minus* a certain percentage which is reserved in favour of the bank. This is the essential principle of the game, though in reality it is played with many complications of chances, into which it is not necessary here to enter.

Cheating in connection with the roulette-table is accomplished by means of a 'faked' or falsified roulette. This is arranged so that the numbers around the periphery are not consecutive, but alternately high and low.

Indeed, this is the usual arrangement, therefore there is nothing suspicious in that fact. The numbered divisions into one of which the ball eventually rolls are formed by equidistant copper bands, set radially from the centre of rotation ; and, in the false roulette, the copper partitions are so constructed as to be movable in two sets, one moving one way, and the other in the opposite direction. Each alternate partition belongs to the opposite set to its two immediate neighbours, consequently the movement of the partitions alternately in opposite directions tends to widen one set of cavities and narrow the others. If, then, the original width of the cavities was only just sufficient to allow the ball to drop into either of them, a very slight movement in one direction or the other will serve to prevent the ball from falling into any cavity of one set, whilst allowing it readily to enter either of the other set. Before spinning the roulette, then, the man whose place it is to do so notes the disposition of the bets. If they are principally staked upon the high numbers, he just gives a little twist to the centre of the roulette, in the direction which slightly closes the high numbers and correspondingly opens the low ones. Then the high numbers are bound to lose. Should the bets, on the other hand, be principally upon the low numbers, the spindle is turned in the other direction, thus closing the low numbers and opening the high ones. In this way the bank can never lose by any possible chance. The

movement given to the alternate partitions is, of course, very slight, one-sixteenth of an inch being ample for the purpose.

To enable the reader to better understand the principle involved in this system of cheating, we will investigate its application to a simple modification of the roulette which is sometimes used, and which affords great convenience for the method of falsification we have been considering. This is a wheel composed of a circular centre-piece, with two flat circular plates larger in diameter than the centre or 'hub,' one being fixed above and the other below it. Radially between these flanges, and at equal distances apart, are fixed partitions, which thus convert the periphery of the wheel into a number of chambers or divisions. A (fig. 62) represents the plan of a wheel of this kind, and B shows the same in elevation.

Now, these radial partitions mentioned above are not all fixed to the wheel in the same manner. Each alternate one is attached to the centre or hub, and the others are fixed to the flanges or cheeks. C in the illustration represents the latter, and D the former. The two halves of the wheel C and D being put together, they appear to constitute a genuine wheel such as A. It is obvious, then, that if these two halves can be made to move just a little in opposite directions around their common centre, each alternate division

will become slightly narrower or wider than its immediate neighbours, as the case may be. Then, if the divisions are numbered alternately high and low, it stands to reason that the high numbers can be closed and the low ones opened, or *vice versa*, at will. In the

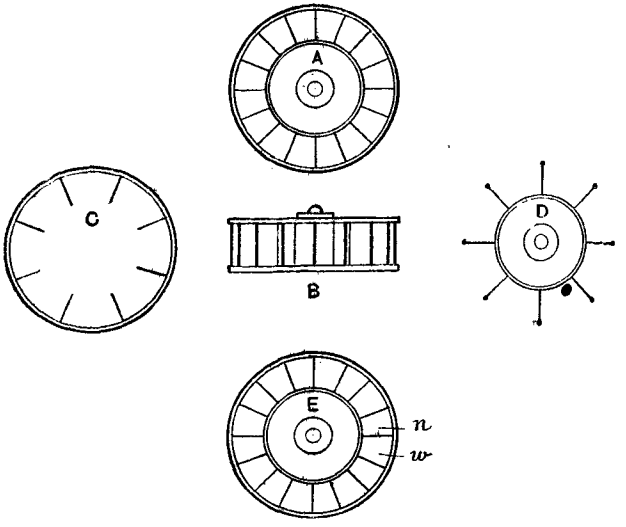

FIG. 62.

illustration, E represents the wheel after the two sections have been turned one upon the other in this way. It will be seen that *n* is a narrow division, and *w* a wide one; whilst right and left of these the divisions are alternately wide and narrow. A wheel of

this kind would be mounted upon a spindle, in the centre of a circular depression in the table-top. After it has been set spinning, a ball is thrown into the circular hollow, down the sloping sides of which it rolls, and finally arrives in one of the divisions of the wheel, in this case entering by the periphery. In order to give the thing more the appearance of a game of skill, a wheel of this kind is sometimes mounted at one end of a sort of bagatelle-table, and, whilst it is spinning, the players are allowed to drive the ball into it with a cue from the far end of the table, each player in succession taking his turn at the ball. Needless to say, however this plan presents no particular advantage to the player. If he has backed a high number, and the high numbers are closed against him, it is evident that he cannot possibly cause the ball to enter the division he requires, do what he may.

It should also be noted that in the roulette the divisions, in addition to being numbered alternately high and low, are also alternately coloured red and black, and the players have the option of betting upon either colour. That is to say, if the ball rolls into a red division, irrespective of its number, those who have staked upon the red will receive the value of their stakes, whilst those who have wagered upon black will lose their money. Even in this case, however, the chances in favour of the bank will tell in the long run, because the 'zeros,' the

numbers reserved for the bank, are neither red nor black, and if the ball enters a zero neither red nor black will win. The alternate arrangement of the red and black divisions will indicate, at once, that the same device which controls the entrance of the ball into the high or low numbers can also be made to cause either red or black to win, at the pleasure of the bank. In that case there is not much need to trouble about the effect of 'zero' one way or the other.

A gentleman, well known in artistic circles, has favoured me, through a mutual friend, with the following interesting account of a swindle perpetrated in connection with roulette here in London. He entitles it 'A True Gambling Experience'; and it is here given as nearly as possible in his own words.

'Some time ago, a friend of mine wrote to me, asking if I would like to go to a gamble at the rooms of a Mr. X——, who had acquired a certain notoriety by gaining large sums at Monte Carlo. Indeed, his name was mentioned almost daily in the London Press. I went, and the game of roulette was played, the guests being regaled at about midnight with a most excellent supper and "Pol Roger" *ad lib.*

'The company was mixed—a few men from club-land, a well-known money-lender, and two fair ladies. One lady was our hostess, the other was the celebrated Baroness ——. The game was played quite fairly, the

board being one of those ordinarily used in England, with one "zero." The stakes were limited to 20*l.* upon the even money chances.

'At the end of the evening, our host—the much-talked-of gentleman of Monte Carlo—who had won about 1,000*l.* during the sitting, appointed another evening, and asked me if I would mind taking the bank. I consented, provided that I might stop when I had lost as much as I cared to risk. This was acceded to, and I took the bank on the following week, when I arose a loser of some 300*l.*, but had such consolation as was to be derived from partaking of a supper similar in character to the first, everything being absolutely *en prince*. A game of baccarat followed, and a friend of mine was fortunate enough to win some hundreds from our host. I myself, having settled up all my losings at roulette, was a gainer of fifty sovereigns or so. At the end of the evening, our host excused himself from payment, on the ground that he had had a very bad week racing, and had a very heavy settlement to make on the Monday, "I know," he said, "you and your friend will not mind waiting until next week, when we will have another evening." Of course we agreed to wait until the next meeting.

'Some days after, I had a letter from Mr. X——, stating that he had much pleasure in sending me a cheque (enclosed), and remarking that he intended having an evening at the rooms of a friend of his, near Charing

Cross. The evening arrived, and I duly wended my way to the address Mr. X—— had given me. I found about twenty people assembled, among them my friend and another man I knew. I went up to the former and asked him if Mr. X—— had paid up the money he owed him. "Oh yes," he said, "he has paid me in those," pointing to a heap of counters in front of him. The game had commenced when I arrived, and I noticed that the limit of the stakes was double that of the former occasions, viz. 40*l.* upon the even money chances. I further noticed that a Frenchman (who could not speak a word of English) was turning the wheel, and Mr. X—— was acting as "croupier." The board was not similar to that used on former occasions.

'The game proceeded, the Frenchman rolling the ball, and Mr. X—— raking in the losing and paying out the winning stakes. Every now and then a man would retire hard hit, whilst others were constantly arriving. Business was brisk, a good trade was being carried on, but nobody knew how certain the bank was of winning. A Rothschild could not have stood against that board, as I afterwards discovered.

'Presently, one of the players got up and said, "I think that is seven hundred I owe you, X——," and proceeded to try and write a cheque for the amount upon a blank sheet of paper; but finding he could not write distinctly, he called to the money-lender, who filled in

the body of the cheque, and then the half-tipsy punter signed it and left. Several large cheques were paid to X—— upon various players taking their departure; and I, having lost 10*l.* punting in sovereigns, wrote a cheque for that amount. In the meantime, my friend who had been paid by X—— some hundreds in counters, as before mentioned, had lost them all, and had a debit of about 400*l.* against him. He was staking the maximum each time on either red or black. Sometimes he had a maximum on one of the other chances. The luck (?) was dead against him, and he only won once in every three or four coups. He came into the next room with me and had a brandy and soda. "My luck is terrible," he said, "awful! but I am going to sit it out. The chances must average up presently." Such, however, was not the case. He lost more and more, whilst beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

'Relaxing for a moment my attention from my friend and his play, and glancing at the roulette revolving, I noticed the ball roll into division No. 3, red. Strange to say, however, when the roulette came to rest, the winning number proved to be No. 26, black. Even then the thought did not occur to me that there was anything wrong; but shortly afterwards a similar event occurred, and *then* I felt sure there was a swindle somewhere. I went into the cloak-room where we had left our outer apparel, and putting on my opera hat and cape, returned

to the scene. I pulled my hat well over my eyes and watched the board. Having a quick eye, and being used to roulette, I soon fathomed what is possibly the most beautiful swindle ever invented. The partitions which form the divisions into which the ball runs were constructed in one piece and movable, altogether apart from the numbers between which they were situated. In pressing upon the roulette to stop its motion in the usual manner, a sort of ratchet movement could be actuated which would turn the whole of the divisions round, carrying the ball with them, from one number to the next. Thus red could be turned into black, manque into passe, or pair into impair, according to the manner in which the stakes were placed.

'I was so completely upset by my discovery of this colossal swindle that I unfortunately committed a *faux pas* which enabled the gang to escape punishment. After I was thoroughly certain of the *modus operandi*, I looked round the room to see what help was at hand in the event of a tussle ; but, not liking the look of the crowd, I decided to obtain assistance from the outside. Before doing so, I felt that my clear duty was to speak to the host, who had lent his rooms to Mr. X——. I motioned him apart, and on telling him that I wished to speak to him privately, he took me into his bedroom. "Mr. Z——," I said, "I think it my duty to tell you that this game is a gigantic swindle. The men who have lost

have been cheated out of their money," and I described the process to him. "It cannot be true," said he, "I have known X—— for years, and have been engaged in several large financial transactions with him, and I would stake my life upon his integrity." "Well," I said, "that may be so, but I am certain of what I say, and I shall prevent all the payment I can. As for my cheque of 10*l.*, I shall stop it at the bank." (That cheque has never been presented from that day to this).

'I went out into the passage, leaving Z—— in his bedroom, and at that moment the well-known Mr. ——, F.R.C.S. was admitted at the door. I whispered to him, "Play small and watch it," and went off for a detective. I was afterwards informed by my "sawbones" friend that play was stopped directly I left.

'The rest of the tale is soon told. I met my unfortunate friend outside his house, and found he had ended in losing 1,300*l.* His state was truly pitiable, and his relief was great when I told him that he need not pay a penny, as he had been duped.

'The next day private detectives were busy; but, unfortunately, the mechanical board had escaped them, and Mr. X—— and his confederates had cleared out of London.

'Would you believe it? X—— went to a well-known firm of solicitors, and wanted to commence an action against me; but they advised him to refrain from so doing.

'I traced many of the punters who had lost money that evening, and stopped the payment of very much that would otherwise have found its way into the pockets of the swindlers. The men whose interests I thus protected never thanked me. All I contrived to do for myself was to make many enemies. For the future I intend to leave the exposure of swindlers to those who are accustomed to that kind of work.'

Under the general term of 'spindle-games,' a great variety of revolving wheels and pointers is sold. In all cases the 'game' consists of betting against the bank, upon the chances of a ball rolling into a certain compartment, or of a pointer coming to rest opposite a certain number or division upon a dial. Countless are the dodges and devices resorted to with the object of controlling the chances or of removing them altogether. Things of this kind are commonly used for the purposes of cheating at race-meetings and horse-fairs 'out west.' We have already seen how anything in the nature of a roulette can be sophisticated so as to give the bank every advantage, and insure certain loss to the players; and from this we may judge that something similar is possible in the case of a pointer or 'spear.' Indeed, the possibilities in this direction are endless, and all sorts of brakes and such devices for bringing the pointer to rest at a given spot have been invented. As an example we will investigate one system, which is in

all probability the most ingenious ever devised, and which is but little known.

Some years ago, the head of a well-known firm of electricians and experimentalists in Manchester was approached by an American, with a view to their undertaking the manufacture of a piece of apparatus, part of the drawings for which he submitted. The firm agreed to make what was required, and the work was commenced. As to what the apparatus could possibly be, or for what use it was intended, the manufacturers were completely in ignorance. Never having had experience of anything of the kind before, the whole thing was a mystery to them: all that they could infer from the utterances of their customer was that it was something in the nature of an experiment, and one which was of the greatest importance. Expense was absolutely no object whatever; all they had to concern themselves with was to see that the apparatus was thoroughly well and accurately made, and in accordance with the drawings given them.

The contrivance itself was a sort of circular table-top; but, instead of being made of one solid thickness of wood, it was constructed in three sections or layers. The top and bottom pieces were simply plain discs, whilst the central one was a ring. These, being fastened together, made a kind of shallow box, the interior of which could be reached by removing either the top or bottom of the whole arrangement. Into this internal circular cavity

was fitted a disc of such a size that it was capable of turning freely within the table top without rattling about. Radially from the centre of this disc were cut about six or eight slots, at equal distances from each other, and sufficiently large to contain each a bar-magnet. The magnets being fixed into their respective slots, the disc carrying them was placed into the cavity prepared for its reception, and the outer wood-work was firmly glued together. To all outward appearance, then, the thing became simply a table-top, made in three thicknesses, the 'grain' of the middle thickness crossing that of the other two; an arrangement often adopted in cabinet-work to prevent warping. In the under side of the table-top, however, there was cut a small slot, concentric with the outer edge. This gave access to the movable piece within the interior, and a small stud was fixed into that piece, projecting a little beyond the under surface, so that by its means the inner piece could be revolved a short distance to the right or left.

This incomprehensible scientific instrument having been completed to the satisfaction of the American gentleman, it was taken away by him, and the firm expected to hear nothing more of it. In this, however, they were mistaken. A few days afterwards their customer again called upon them, bringing with him another drawing, and requesting them to make this second device in accordance with his instructions. The

drawing presented for the inspection of the firm this time was a representation of a very heavy iron pointer, so constructed as to revolve upon a pivot at its centre. Strange to say, the length of the pointer was just about equal to the diameter of the internal disc of the table-top previously made. The head of the firm began to 'smell a rat.' That pointer had served to point out to him the solution of what was previously inexplicable. Having formed his own conclusions, he openly taxed the American with having lured him into making an apparatus for cheating. Perfectly unabashed, the man admitted the soft impeachment, and quite calmly and collectedly revealed the full particulars of his system, as though it were nothing at all unusual, and quite in the ordinary way of business.

It appeared that this innocent form of amusement was intended to be taken 'out west,' and brought into action principally at horse-fairs. The table-top which the firm had made was destined to be covered with green cloth, in the centre of which a circle was marked out, its circumference being divided into spaces coloured alternately black and red. The number of these spaces was twice that of the magnets within the table. Thus, by moving the stud projecting below the table-top the magnets could be made to lie beneath either colour whilst the proprietor *lied* over the whole. Obviously, then, the iron pointer would always come to rest above

one of the magnets, and in this way the colour at which it was allowed to stop could be decided by the operator. His plan of working was simply to note which colour had the most money staked upon it, and set his magnets so as to cause the pointer to stop at the other. Using an apparatus of this kind, the man had already made thousands of dollars; and he only required this improved and perfected machine to enable him to go back and make thousands more. The Americans are pretty generally regarded as being a smart people—but are they? In some ways, perhaps.

All this being explained to the head of the Manchester firm, the natural exclamation which fell from him was, 'But suppose anyone among the bystanders happened to bring out a mariner's compass?' It appeared, however, even in that case, that all was not lost, and that the swindler would be equal to the occasion. Quietly putting his hand between his coat-tails, he drew out a neat little 'Derringer,' about a foot long, and observed, 'Wal, *sir*, I guess that compass would never git around *my* table. You kin bet on *that*.' That's the sort of man *he* was.

CHAPTER XIII

SPORTING-HOUSES

We now come to a consideration of the so-called 'sporting-houses,' otherwise, the firms who supply sharps with the appliances and tools of their craft. These places are many, and, as a rule, prosperous. Their dealings in 'advantage goods,' as these things are called by the fraternity, are of course 'under the rose,' and the real nature of their business is covered by the fact that they are supposed to be dealers in honest commodities of various kinds. Some of these people keep 'emporiums' for the ostensible sale of genuine gambling appliances, such as faro-tables, billiard-tables, dice, cards, &c. Others will run businesses which are far removed from anything in the nature of gambling. The cheating business is, of course, kept in the background, although no great secret would appear to be made of it; the inference being, one may suppose, that it is not criminal to sell these things, although it is undoubtedly so to use them.

Until quite recently it was no uncommon thing to find advertisements in certain of the American newspapers,

to some such effect as 'Holdouts and other Sporting Tools.—Apply to Messrs. So-and-So,' giving the name and address. An advertisement of this kind would, of course, be simply Greek to the majority, although the sharps would understand its meaning readily enough. Upon applying to the advertiser, a sharp would receive a voluminous price list, setting forth the manifold beauties and advantages of the wares at his disposal, and showing conclusively that no other dealer had things so good to sell, and that the advertising firm was the most fair dealing and conscientious in the world, if their own account of themselves might be trusted.

The first specimen of these literary and artistic productions to which we shall refer is a very exhaustive affair; so much so, in fact, that space will not allow it to be reprinted in its entirety. Besides cheating appliances it quotes all kinds of genuine gambling tools, which are of no importance to us in our present inquiry. Such parts, then, as have no reference to cheating have been excised, to avoid crowding these pages with unnecessary matter. The reader who has conscientiously followed, and taken pains to understand the explanations contained in previous chapters, will have no difficulty in arriving at a very fair notion of the various items given, and the significance of much that, otherwise, would possess no meaning for him. This catalogue is issued by a firm in San Francisco.

THE ONLY

SPORTING EMPORIUM

ON THE PACIFIC COAST.

(*Name*) & (*Name*), **COMPANY.**

DEALERS IN AND MANUFACTURERS OF

Sporting Goods.

(*Address*) STREET,

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

READ THIS! OUR TERMS ARE STRICTLY CASH.

All orders MUST be accompanied by a deposit, and no order will be entertained unless the deposit is indorsed or sent with the order, to show a guarantee of good faith. On small orders send the full amount, and thus save the double charges.

Goods sent C. O. D. ONLY where a deposit comes with the order or guarantee from the Express Agent. All remittances can be sent by Express, Mail, Post Office Order, Stamps, or Registered Letter.

☞ All business strictly confidential, and all inquiries answered by return mail.

☞ *WE WILL NOT DEVIATE FROM THE ABOVE TERMS.* ☜

Always say whether you want Letters and Goods sent by Mail or Express.

(*Name and Address.*)

FARO TOOLS

DEALING-BOXES, plated	$10	00
square, heavy German silver	16	00
„ „ „ „ plated	20	00
plated, sand tell	15	00
heavy German silver, sand tell	20	00
„ „ „ plated, sand tell	25	00
side lever, heavy plated	50	00
square, size-up	60	00
end squeeze, plain	75	00
„ „ and lock up	100	00
„ „ plain, to squeeze top and bottom	85	00
„ „ lock-up, to squeeze top and bottom	100	00
balance top, plain	75	00
„ „ to lock up	100	00
end squeeze, lock-up and size-up	125	00
„ „ „ „ needle	125	00
latest style combination box, to work in four different ways, size-up, end squeeze, and needle, to lock up to a square box	175	00
shuffling board with needle	12	50
needle for table	2	50
very latest combination box to work in five different ways, size-up, sand tell, end squeeze, and needle, lock-up to a square box	200	00

In ordering, state exactly the kind of top that is desired, also if the box is to have bars inside or to be without bars.

Our boxes are made with a view to simplicity, durability, and finish, are guaranteed to work perfectly, and pronounced by experts to be the best in the United States.

Boxes of any style made to order and repaired.

We are constantly making improvements in this line.

Lever boxes altered into end squeeze.

TRIMMING SHEARS, metal block	$40	00
metal block, to cut, size-up, and the odd .	50	00
latest improved, with extra set screw . .	65	00
LEVER PATTERN, metal block	40	00
to cut, size-up, and the odd	50	00
latest improved, with extra set screw . .	65	00
metal block, small size, suitable for travelling .	35	00
" " " " " to cut, size-up, and the odd	45	00
latest improved, to cut, size-up, and the odd, with extra set screw, and attachment, to hold monte cards while trimming . .	75	00

In ordering shears or lever-pattern trimmers, state what kind and style you want.

TRIMMING PLATES (new style), our own design, to cut any size card, rounds or straights. A knife, razor, or any other sharp instrument can be used.	$7	50
CUTTER, for cutting round corners on cards (something new), our own invention . . .	20	00
for the odd only	20	00

Trimming shears sharpened and squared equal to new at short notice.

You can do more and better work with our shears and trimmers than any other manufactured in the United States. They are made of the very best materials, and under our personal supervision. The cutting parts are made of the finest steel, and forged by hand, making them all that could be desired.

SHUFFLING BOARDS, very thin iron, broadcloth cover	$3	00
for the odd	15	00

FARO TOOLS (*continued*):—

FARO DEALING CARDS, best quality, either squared or unsquared, per dozen 15 00
per deck 1 25
best quality, cut for size-up 1 75
cut in any form, either wedges, rounds, and straights, end strippers, or any other kind, ready for use, per deck 2 50

In ordering cards cut, always send a king or ace that fits your box, or if your box is numbered, send the number, and state particularly how you want them done.

Cash is required with all orders for trimmed cards.

HIGH-BALL LAYOUTS, 3 by 4 feet $6 00
Other sizes and styles painted to order.
HIGH BALLS, walrus ivory, each 20
boxwood 10
HIGH-BALL BOTTLES, leather, two in set, one square, $2 50, one holdout $7 50 . . 10 00

CLUBROOM FURNITURE

FARO TABLES. . . . . $75 00 to $100 00
POKER TABLES, our own invention . . . 250 00
DICE TABLES, electric, complete, our invention . 150 00
POKER and DICE TABLE combined . . . 350 00
GRAND HAZARD DICE TABLE, electric, complete, our own invention 175 00
ELECTRIC DICE, ½ inch, each. 2 50
IVORY DICE TOP, to throw high or low as required, and one square to match 7 00
IVORY DICE, ½ inch, round or square corners, each 25
$\frac{9}{16}$ inch, round corners, each 35
$\frac{5}{8}$ " " " " 45
$\frac{3}{4}$ " " " " 80

IVORY DICE, ⅞ inch, round corners, each . . 1 25
1 „ „ „ „ . . 2 00
Horse for crap game, ½ inch, per pair . . 50
for top and bottom and 3 fair 1 00
3 high, 3 low, and 3 fair loaded (Eastern), per set 6 00
loaded, our own manufacture, ½ inch, each . 2 50
„ „ „ ⅝ „ . 2 75
„ „ „ ¾ or ⅞ inch, each 3 00

In ordering dice, please state which side you want to come up; also state if you want a square set to match. All kinds of ivory dice made to order.

BONE DICE, per dozen . . . . . 25c. to 50c.
DICE BOXES, leather . . . . . 25c. and 50c.
smooth inside $1 00

KENO OUTFITS

KENO, consisting of globe and stand, 100 cards, pegging boards, 100 pegs, ball board, 90 walrus balls and buttons, very fine . . $70 00
with boxwood balls, very fine 60 00
with walrus globes, plain globe . . . 50 00
with boxwood balls, plain globe . . . 40 00
INDICATORS, for registering cards sold . . . 10 00
PULL-UP PEG BOARD, for 100 cards . . . 20 00
KENO CARDS, 9 rows, 5 in a row, 100 cards . . 15 00
KENO GLOBE, for holding out extra balls . . 65 00

SHORT GAMES

VEST HOLDOUT, our own pattern $25 00
SLEEVE HOLDOUT . . $25 00, 30 00, 50 00, and 150 00
TABLE HOLDOUT, to work with the knee . . 15 00
THE BUG, to hold out extra cards from the table . 1 00
TABLE REFLECTOR 5 00
REFLECTOR, in seven half-dollars 7 50
„ in one half-dollar 2 50

SHORT GAMES (*continued*);—

REFLECTOR, in one dollar	$3 50
„ in pipe	5 00
„ to work on any ring	2 00
„ to fasten to greenbacks	2 00
„ plain	1 50
„ attached to machine, can be brought to palm of hand at will	25 00
DUMMIES, to imitate a stack of twenties, used to show in bankers' or money-brokers' windows, to represent $100	$2 75
to represent $200	3 25
„ „ $300	3 75
„ „ $400	4 00
„ „ $500	5 00
NAIL PRICKS, each.	50
ACID FLUID, for shading cards, 3 colours, very fine and entirely new, complete with directions, per set, 6 bottles.	5 00
single bottle, any colour	1 00

MARKED CARDS

Per dozen	10 00
Per deck.	1 00
Glazed backs, round corners, per dozen.	14 00
„ „ „ deck	1 25
By mail, 5 cents per deck extra.	
STRIPPERS, cut to order for any short game, per dozen	7 00
cut to order for any short game, per deck	75
By mail, 5 cents per deck extra.	

In ordering these cards, state what kind of card preferred, and be particular to give full directions—just what you want them for, and what cards you want stripped.

The next catalogue to which we refer hails from the State of New York, and is that from which extracts have been made during the progress of this book. It is particularly amusing, and deserves careful perusal on that account.

THE LATEST SLEEVE HOLDOUT

The finest machine in this country. All late improvements, better made than some machines that are sold for $300. A better machine than the Kepplinger, of San Francisco, holdout. Made of fine and light pen steel, and works as well in shirt sleeves as with a coat on. The machine is fastened in a double shirt sleeve. The cards go in between the wristband and cuff. The wristband and cuff closes up when the cards are in, and anyone may look up your sleeve to your elbow and cannot see anything wrong. The holdout is worked by spreading your knees. The string runs through steel tubing that has capped pulley wheel joints. The string cannot bind or catch, and will work smoothly, easy, and noiselessly, every time alike. Give length of arm and size of shirt worn when ordering. Price, $100. Will send one C. O. D. $75, with privilege to examine, on receipt of $25.

KEPPLINGER VEST, OR COAT MACHINE

New, never before advertised. Made on same principle as the sleeve holdout, and works by spreading knees. String goes through adjustable tubing. Vest closes up tight when cards are in, and looks to be all buttoned up tight. Works equally well in coat. (This is almost a nickle-in-slot machine, and I will guarantee perfect satisfaction to anyone that wants a first-class vest or coat holdout.) Sent in vest all ready to put on and work. Price $75. Will send one C. O. D. $60, privilege to examine and try in express office, on receipt of $15.

STUD POKER HOLDOUT

Very light and compact, works under any ordinary cuff. Cards come out to palm of hand and go back out of sight. Works automatically by resting arm on edge of table. Also a good machine to cap the deck with. Price $30. Sent C. O. D. $20, privilege to examine, on receipt of $15.

ARM PRESSURE VEST MACHINE

This machine weighs about three ounces, and is used half way down the vest, where it comes natural to hold your hands and cards. The work is done with one hand and the lower part of the same arm. You press against a small lever with the arm (an easy pressure of three-quarters of an inch throws out the cards back of a few others held in your left hand), and you can reach over to your checks or do anything else with the right hand while working the holdout The motions are all natural, and do not cause suspicion. The machine is held in place by a web belt; you don't have to sew anything fast, but when you get ready to play you can put on the machine, and when through can remove it in half a minute. There are no plates, no strings to pull on, and no springs that are liable to break or get out of order. This machine is worth fifty of the old style vest plates for practical use, and you will say the same after seeing one. Price $15. Will send one C. O. D. $10, with privilege to examine, on receipt of $5. Will send one by registered mail on receipt of price, with the understanding that you may return it in exchange for other goods if not perfectly satisfactory.

ARM PRESSURE SLEEVE MACHINE

Same price and style as the arm pressure vest machine. (This holdout is the lightest and smoothest working arm pressure sleeve holdout made.)

TEN DOLLAR SLEEVE HOLDOUT

Light and compact, can be put on or taken off in two minutes, works by raising and lowering your arm. A good machine for small games. Sent by registered mail on receipt of the price.

AUTOMATIC TABLE HOLDOUT

Lightest made, fastens by patent steel claw. Can be put under a table and taken off instantly, as there are no screws or anything to fasten permanently. Works by knee, and brings the card up on top of the table. Price $20. Sent C. O. D., privilege to examine, on receipt of $5.

Notice.—I can make this holdout or my stud poker holdout, either one, to work a fine reflector for reading the cards, at same price.

TO SMART POKER PLAYERS

I have invented a process by which a man is sure of winning if he can introduce his own cards. The cards are not trimmed or marked in any way, shape, or manner. They can be handled and shuffled by all at the board, and, without looking at a card, you can, by making two or three shuffles or ripping them in, oblige the dealer to give three of a kind to any one playing, or the same advantage can be taken on your own deal. This is a big thing for any game. In euchre you can hold the joker every time, or the cards most wanted in any game. The process is very hard to detect, as the cards look perfectly natural, and it is something card-players are not looking for. Other dealers have been selling sanded cards, or cheap cards with spermaceti rubbed on, and calling them professional playing or magnetic cards. I don't want you to class my cards with that kind of trash. I use a liquid preparation put on with rollers on all cards made; this dries on the cards and does not show, and will

last as long as the cards do. The object is to make certain cards, not prepared, slip off easier than others in shuffling. You can part or break the deck to an ace or king, and easily 'put up threes,' no matter where they lay in the deck. This fine advantage works fine single handed, or when the left-hand man shuffles and offers the cards to be cut. These cards are ten times better than readers or strippers, and they get the money faster. Price $2 per pack by mail, $20 per dozen packs. If you order a dozen, I will furnish cards like you use.

CUFF HOLDOUT

Weighs two ounces, and is a neat invention to top the deck, to help a partner, or hold out a card playing stud poker; also good to play the half stock in seven up. This holdout works in the shirt sleeve, and holds the cards in the same place as a cuff pocket. There is no part of the holdout in sight at any time. A man that has worked a pocket will appreciate this invention. Price, by registered mail, $10.

RING HOLDOUT

Fits under any ring worn on third finger. A fine thing to top the deck. You can hold as many cards as you wish in your hand, and no one will mistrust you, as your fingers will be at perfect liberty, and it is not necessary to keep them together as you have to do when palming.. Price, by registered mail, $3.

TABLE HOLDOUT

Very small and light. It can be put under and removed from any table in less than half a minute. Works easily from either knee. It will bring three or more cards up into your hand, and take back the discards as you hold your cards and hands in a natural position on top of the table. It is the best table holdout made. Price, by registered mail, $10.

Will send one C. O. D., with privilege to examine, on receipt of $3.

THE BUG

A little instrument, easily carried in your vest pocket, that can be used at a moment's notice to hold out one or more cards in any game. Simple, yet safe and sure. Price 50 cents.

NEW MARKING INK

For line or scroll work. Any one can apply it with a fine steel pen or camel's hair brush. This ink dries quickly and does not require any rubbing. Will guarantee it to be the best ink made. Price $3 per bottle. Two bottles, red and blue, $5. Best shading colours, $2 per bottle.

REFLECTOR

Fastens by pressing steel spurs into under side of table. A fine glass comes to the edge of table to read the cards as you deal them off. You can set the glass at any angle or turn it back out of sight in an instant. Price $4.

MARKED CARDS

First quality cards, hand marked, $1 50 per pack, $14 per dozen. First quality cards, shaded plain or fine, $11 per dozen. I can mark any style card you use if ordered by the dozen packs. Strippers cut just as you want them. Price $1 per pack.

LOADED DICE

Made of selected ivory loaded with quicksilver, and can be shaken from the box so as to come high or low, as you wish. With a set of these you will find yourself winner at all dice games, and carry off the prize at every raffle you attend. Sold in sets of 9 dice, 3 high, 3 low, and 3 fair. Price, per set complete, $5.

DICE TOPS

For high and low. Sure thing. Made of best ivory, $4. Black walnut, just as good, $1 25.

Eagle claw, to hold out cards in shirt sleeve. Price $5.

Knee holdout, to hold out cards from edge of table. Price $2 50.

Prong, improved, to use as cuff pocket. Price $4.

New method of marking cards like scratch work. This work leaves a white line or mark on the card that cannot be shaded. Price of material, tools, and full directions, $10. This is the kind of work good men have been trying to get for some time.

NOTICE

It will *pay* any man that plays cards to come and see my work. I will meet you at Chatham, New York, and will pay all expenses if I don't show you the *best* goods made. If you want any reference regarding my standing, write to —— Bros., merchants, or any business firm of this town. They don't recommend advantage goods, but they will tell you that I am good for all I advertise to do. If you want to get a holdout or anything in the sporting line that you have ever seen used or advertised, write to me about them and see how my prices compare with others. I know all about every kind of advantage ever advertised, and am getting new ones every day, but only advertise those I know to be practical. If you send me an order, no matter how large or small, I shall try to give you the worth of your money, so that you will send again. I am the only manufacturer of holdouts in this country. I am the only man who makes the holdouts he advertises for sale himself. I will bet $500, —— to hold the money and decide the bet, that no other dealer advertising advantage goods can make a sleeve or vest

machine themselves as good as either of mine. If you play cards it will pay you to come here and see my machines work. I will pay all expenses if I cannot show you the best holdouts made. Send money by registered letter, postal note, or money order on Chatham, New York. Send all orders to ——.

The educated man who does not smile at the bombast and 'Yankee-brag' contained in the above, surely cannot have his risible faculties developed in any degree whatever.

The next catalogue we shall notice comes from New York City itself, and is couched in the following terms :—

OUR LATEST MARKED BACK PLAYING CARDS

Round corners, big squeezers, first quality linen stock, warranted. Price, per pack, $1 25 ; six packs, $7 ; one dozen packs, $12.

TO CARD PLAYERS

These cards are by far the finest-marked cards ever printed, and are fully equal in every way, quality of stock, print, and finish of both back and face, to any first quality square card made.

This fills the long-felt want among the sporting fraternity, and it is the best offer ever made to club-rooms and private parties. They are new, and never before this season been placed on the market.

They are especially adapted for fine work, and great care has been given to the marking of both size and suit, and it is almost an impossibility to find the marks and earn the com-

bination without the key and complete printed instructions, which we send with every pack; but when learned they are as easily read from the back as from the face.

Nos. 1, 2, and 5 are marked in all four corners alike, so as to be readily played by either right or left-hand players, and are marked on an entirely different principle than old-style stamped cards.

Attention is requested to our 'Montana,' No. 3, and to our 'Star,' No. 4. We furnish them in the colours mentioned and used in all games throughout the entire country. Order the cards by the numbers directly over them. Price, per pack, $1 25; six packs, $7; one dozen packs, $12.

We can furnish square cards to exactly duplicate Nos. 1, 2, and 5, at $3 per dozen, by express.

Strippers of all these cards, for poker and all games, furnished with either fair or marked backs. For prices and particulars see our circulars. Address all orders to ——

The following is a hand-bill issued by the same firm as the last, and specially addressed—

TO FARO DEALERS

We handle, and keep constantly in stock, all the latest and best combination boxes, both end squeeze, top balance, lever and side movement, etc., etc., but we make a speciality of our own boxes, and recommend them to any one needing a *good reliable box, that can be depended on at all times.* These boxes are simple, durable, and by far the best boxes ever placed on the market. We make them up perfectly plain, without bars, have the bottom movement (entirely new), and they can be locked to a dead square box by a table movement which cannot be detected. We make our boxes up to

lock by three combinations, and we *guarantee them in every way.*

End squeeze, three combinations . . .	$100 to $125
„ „ without bottom movement . . .	100
Top Balance, bottom movement, three combinations .	100
Needle or 'spur tell' for the odd, bottom movement .	65
„ „ „ without bottom movement .	50

We also make an end squeeze that no one can tell from a square box, as the end of box is immovable, the metal of the end being thinner than rest of box, being able to spring or give as it is pressed, and doing the work. This is one of the finest boxes ever made. Price $100.

We also make plain tell boxes, without bars, *which can be charged* [query '*changed*'] from a square to a tell box in an instant without the possibility of detection, and we will guarantee that no one can find the combination. (Do not confound these with the ordinary lock-up sand tell box.)

Our boxes are perfect in every particular, and will do the work. The cards for these boxes are specially prepared by a machine which takes the place of sand and all kinds of preparation. They are by far superior to any cards sanded or prepared by hand. Our manner of preparing cards for these boxes is by having the twelve paint cards prepared, so by playing in the high card *the money is won without creating suspicion*, by being always actually on the card with the work on.

Price	$25
With six packs prepared cards	35

These are the instructions sent out with the fluids used for marking cards. The spelling must not be criticised. It is similar to that of the original :—

'DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING AND USING OUR COLORS.

'Take the color that comes nearest to the color of the card you want to use it on, put a few drops in an empty bottle, and dilute with Alcohol untill you get a Shade as near like the Card as possible. To avoid spilling, as sometimes happens in trying to pour or drop, the dye may be lifted out of the bottles with the brush, by repeatedly dipping the brush into them, and then wiping the brush on the mouth of the empty Bottle. It is better to put the Alcohol into the empty bottle *first*, then when you lift the dye out on the brush you can dip the brush right in the Alcohol, and tell better when you have the right shade. As you mix the colors, try them on a surface like that on which you may intend to use them, in this way any shade may be obtained. Always bear in mind that the Colors show *deeper* when *moist*, (as is the case when they are first put on), and become fainter as they dry, and when dry if they are *too light* go over them again. Eveness is more apt to be obtained by using a little lighter shade of color after the first application.

'A little care and practice will enable any one to handle these colors satisfactorily.

'In marking you can pick out any number of figures from four to six, having them as near the upper left hand corner as conveneient, a Flower which has 5 leaves is best, or the right number of figures in a circle.

'Shade all the figures except No. 1, leaving it light. or natural for the Ace, No. 2 light for King, No. 3 light for Queen, No. 4 for Jack, No. 5 for 10 spot, 1 & 2 light for 9 spot, 2 and 3 for 8, 3 and 4 for 7, 4 and 5 for 6, 5 and 1 for 5, 2 and 5 for 4, 2 and 4 for 3, and 3 and 5 for 2. In doing *very nice work* we shade the entire back of the card *except* the *figure* which denotes the size and suit.

'For suit pick out two figures near those you use for size,

and have *both dark for Clubs*, and both light or natural for Diamonds, have one of them dark for Spades ; and the other dark for Hearts. With six figures the combination runs similar to the five figures which we have explained, and a four figure runs the same down to the seven spot. After a little practice you will see many ways of marking your cards.

'The Dyes we use are the Diamond Package Dyes, and can be had of most any Druggist. Make the Dyes according to Directions on the package, using only one *half the quantity of water* directed, and strain through a cloth, if there is any sediment in the dye after adding the Alcohol strain it again as it is necessary to have it as clear as possible. Do not try to use the dyes without the Alcohol, or it will be a failure, as it is the Alcohol which causes the Dye to strike into the card. Always keep the bottles well corked when not using them. Brushes and bottles should be kept clean, and if the brushes are washed in water, they must be thoroughly dried before using, as water will blister smooth, calendered surfaces. Never let your brush get dry when using, but dip it occasionally, care being taken not to have too much on the brush, and use immediately, if the alcohol evaporates from the dye it makes a much eifferent colour.'

The foregoing price-lists, &c., as may be expected, are all printed. It is not always, however, that the dealer in 'advantages' goes to the expense of print in connection with the documents he issues ; he sometimes uses the cyclostyle or mimeograph, particularly in the case of directions for use accompanying the various articles in which he deals. When, in this way, he has no longer the friendly aid of the compositor or the printer's reader, his vagaries of grammar and construction are revealed in

all their primitive innocence. To commence one of his sentences is like embarking upon an unknown sea, or following a half-beaten track through a desert. Onward the course runs, apparently for ever, and no man can tell when the end is coming, or what it is likely to be. Pelion is piled upon Ossa, and Parnassus is over all.

A few days ago two or three of these documents were sent to be copied out in type, so as to be somewhat legible for the printer; and, as an evidence of their singularly explicit nature, it may be mentioned that the typist was under the impression that they were all parts of one document, and copied out the whole as one, without break from beginning to end. Such a thing, of course, was quite excusable under the circumstances, as the reader may judge from the following example of how not to do it. The entire manuscript consists of one sentence only, so far as punctuation is concerned, and is supposed to contain directions for the use of the prepared cards mentioned upon pp. 223–227. It runs to this effect:—

'Directions.—When you part the pack to shuffle press down a trifle and the cards will part to an Ace (the Ace will be on top of the lower part) put that part with the Ace on top and part again to another Ace now shuffle in all but the four top cards, part the cards again to the third Ace and shuffle in all but the top four cards, then put three cards on top of the last Ace (this puts up three Aces with three cards between them and three on top and is for a four handed game) if one more or less than four are playing shuffle in one more or less cards, (always have as many cards between and

on top of the Aces as there are players excluding yourself) when the left hand man deals and offers the cards to you to cut you can shuffle them up in the same way (but you must put "one less" card on top of the three Aces to get the Aces yourself)'

Presumably this is the end of the 'instructions,' as there is no more matter to follow; but one cannot be surprised that an unhappy typist, endeavouring to make sense of it, should follow straight on to the next, under the impression that the general effect of disjointedness thus produced was part and parcel of the whole occult scheme.

The directions sent out with the 'Jacob's Ladder' vest machine are very similar in character to the last. There is, however, one 'full-stop' in this case, probably the one which the typist was looking for. This is the manner in which the dealer instructs the purchaser in the use of his machine :—

'DIRECTIONS FOR VEST MACHINE

'Fasten the Belt around your waist so that the Machine will come on left side far enough from the edge of Vest to let the cards go back out of sight. Pin the under lap of Vest on the edge to the belt opposite the third or middle button, if you are a large man or if you want the mouth of the M- to come out farther, turn down the screw on front part of Lever, to hold out 3 cards place them back of a few others held in left hand with a break or opening between them on the lower ends, press against the lever with the lower part of arm and as the mouth of the M- comes out to the edge of

Vest put the cards in (let your little finger come against the lower side of the mouth) this will be a guide and you can put the cards in without looking down, (a good way is to reach over to your checks or to "put up" with right hand while working the Machine) less than a ½-in. pressure will throw out the cards'

The instances above quoted will be sufficient to give the reader a fair notion of the barefaced manner in which these nefarious dealings are carried on. There is no beating about the bush in any instance; no hiding away of the real intent with which the goods are supplied. They are not called cheating-tools in so many words, but no attempt is made to smother up the actual nature of the articles. The dealer does not say 'Special Cards,' or 'Comical Cards,' or anything of the kind. He puts the matter plainly before his customers, and says, 'Our Latest Marked Back Playing Cards!' There is no mistaking his meaning; he is proud of it, and likes to let the world know the kind of things he has to sell.

'And where are the police all the while?' you ask. Echo answers 'Where?' and that is the only reply which is forthcoming. They must know of these places where the implements of robbery are made and sold; yet, as a rule, they appear to take no notice of what is going on. Now and again, in those places where the regulations are particularly strict, they have a spasmodic burst of activity; and then the dealers lie low for awhile, until all is quiet again. Occasionally it may happen that some

dealer, whose advertisements have become too flagrantly palpable, is pounced upon and compelled to desist; but even when such a person is obliged to close his business altogether, he simply migrates to the next State, and supplies his former customers through the medium of the Post Office. Very little hardship is entailed upon him, as those who deal with him are necessarily scattered far and wide in various parts of the world, and the stock is not very difficult to remove.

The 'Express Offices' in America must surely know all about this kind of traffic, since they allow the swindling machinery to be tried in their depôts. The C.O.D. system is ample evidence of their connivance.

In sending marked cards through the post, a whole pack is seldom despatched in one parcel. As a rule they are sent a few at a time. This proceeding avoids the payment of duty upon them, effecting a considerable saving sometimes. Other articles are described as sample parts of machinery, and duty is paid upon them in accordance with their value.

The system upon which the business of these firms is conducted shows that not only have they sound commercial instincts, but also that they know their customers particularly well, and have had experience of the class of people with whom they have to deal. They are prepared to send their goods on approval at any time, but on condition that they receive a certain amount of

cash with the order, or at any rate the equivalent of cash, and a guarantee of payment of the balance on delivery. The fact is, they take good care to let no article go out of their hands until they have been paid a little more than it is really worth ; and, therefore, if the sharp who purchases it should prove so forgetful of his obligations as to neglect payment of the remainder, the dealer still makes a profit. As one firm states upon the cover of its price-list, *We will not deviate from the above terms*—and they don't. Cash on delivery is what they require, or, as it is usually abbreviated, 'C.O.D.' There is a good deal of C.O.D. about these transactions, in more ways than one.

In spite of their supposed ''cuteness' one often finds that sharps are as apt to be inveigled into the purchase of worthless articles by means of bogus advertisements as any of their dupes. In certain of the American papers the following advertisement was at one time often seen :—

'Electric cards, as used by professional gamblers. $1,00, &c. Apply—.'

On sending his money to the dealer, the sharp would receive a common pack of cards, with the same instructions as those sent out with the varnished cards which slip at the aces (p. 304). A separate slip was enclosed, however, which informed him that these cards would only retain their electricity for twenty-four hours. He

was, therefore, advised to buy a battery wherewith to recharge (?) them, for the sum of $30.00. When he had made this additional purchase, he found what a little knowledge of electricity would have told him at first, that he had been 'had on toast.' Honour among thieves, again!

Among the dealers in 'advantages' there are some humourists. One man who kept an 'emporium' for the sale of these things in New York City, but who was moved into an adjoining State by the police, used to have his envelopes embellished by the semblance of a bull dog, and the motto 'We still live.' Not bad, is it?

The price lists issued by this same individual were in the form of pamphlets, and contained very exaggerated descriptions of his apparatus and the results produced thereby. Interspersed with the more prosaic details of his wares, one found now and again wise saws or proverbs, altered to suit the tastes of his patrons. Some of the choicest of these 'modern instances' ran as follows:—

'A bug is far above rubies.'

'A holdout in the vest is more use than snide jewelry in the pocket.'

'Get proper tools and use them with discretion, and you will win and last.'

And so on. This kind of thing exhibits the lighter and brighter side of the sharp's nature with much vividness.

The reader may have noticed, at the end of one of the price-lists, that the dealer is able to give references as to his trustworthiness to respectable firms 'who don't recommend advantage goods.' This will not be a matter for surprise when it is understood that the man is supposed to be an honest tradesman carrying on a reputable business. In all probability his referees would have no idea as to the sort of person to whose *bona fides* they are attesting. On the other hand, of course, they may know all about it, in which case they are manifestly no better than the man they are recommending. Still, even in that event, the reference is quite good enough for the sort of people who are likely to be buyers of swindling apparatus. The author has a few dollars' worth of this kind of thing; so perhaps the reader may be inclined to observe that 'Dwellers in glass houses,' &c. However, that's another matter. This book would never have been forthcoming if the author had any objection to a few pounds finding their way into the pockets of those who don't deserve them. The end must justify.

The fact that these people should be allowed to carry on their trade in the way they do is nothing short of a standing disgrace to America and a satire upon civilisation. All men have an admiration for America, though some may only half express it. Let her only be true to herself, true to her traditions, and true to

her *origin* ; let her deal firmly with those who mar her fair fame ; let her learn to cherish that which is best and brightest among her children, and she will one day become the glory of the world—but that day is not yet.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XIV

SHARPS AND FLATS

Now that we have reached the final stage of our inquiry, the reader having been put in possession of all the facts which are material and of importance in connection with it, nothing more remains than to take a brief review of our position, as it were, and see precisely how we stand—to regard the question of gambling as a whole, in fact, and see what conclusions we may arrive at with regard to it, when it is viewed with the eye of common sense, and in the light of the knowledge we have obtained. Every subject, of course, has many aspects, and gambling may be regarded from many different standpoints. In this last chapter, then, and with the reader's permission, I will take the liberty of regarding it from my own ; and, no objection being raised to the proposal, I should prefer to regard these concluding remarks as being made confidentially, so to speak, between the reader and myself. If, in delivering myself of what remains to be said, I should appear to speak either egotistically or dogmatically, I crave pardon beforehand, and beg the reader to believe

that, if I am inclined to emphasise any particular point bearing upon the matter in hand, it is because I feel strongly with reference to it, and not because I wish to pose in the eyes of the world as a champion of right and an opponent of wrong.

Fear has been expressed, in some quarters, that the publication of the secrets contained in this book will be the means of increasing the number of sharps ; that I am simply providing a manual for the instruction of budding swindlers. This may appear very cogent reasoning to some ; but, for all that, it is very poor logic, in reality. In fact, a more groundless fear could not be entertained. It would be as reasonable to say that the manufacture of safes and strong-rooms, and the increase of safeguards against thieves, will tend to augment the number of burglars. Or, to come nearer to the point at issue, one may as well assert that the exposure of spiritualistic frauds has increased the number of 'mediums.' The subject of spiritualism affords a most striking proof of the absurdity of such a contention. Contrast the state of affairs twenty-five years ago, before the crusade against spiritualistic humbug, with that of the present day. Then, dozens of impostors were doing a thriving business. The medium was as much in demand as the most popular society entertainer, and could command larger fees. Spiritualism was a fashionable amusement ; the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy were constantly

being darkened for séances. Now, only two or three miserable rogues, without ability to earn a living in any other way, are dragging out a wretched existence in the East End of London, giving séances in back parlours, and charging a fee of a shilling a head. Even in America things are not much brighter for the medium. Compare Dr. Slade's success in London with his sad end in America, a few weeks ago. In fact, the business is utterly ruined; those who have sufficient ability have become conjurers and 'exposers of spiritualism'; others have become gambling sharps and 'hypnotic subjects.' These facts constitute a complete answer to the assertion that this book will tend to increase the practice of sharping. I maintain that no young man's education should be considered complete without some knowledge of the capabilities of trickery; for, without it, he may be imposed upon by any charlatan.

Apart from the question of sharping, and with reference to the fallacies indulged in by gamblers at large, there are, among a multiplicity of others, three which demand our special attention, and with which I particularly wish to deal. These three mistaken, though very commonly entertained notions, constitute the very basis of what is called fair gambling. They are these :—

1. That gambling is essentially honest.
2. That a bet may be fair to both parties.
3. That betting on fair odds, the chances of each

bettor will, in the long run, so equalise themselves that neither can win nor lose, in an infinite number of bets.

Now, what I undertake to show may be summed up in three statements, which can be put *per contra* to the others, viz. :—

1. That gambling is essentially dishonest.

2. That a bet may be *unfair* to both parties, but cannot possibly be fair to more than one, and that only at the expense of gross injustice to the other.

3. That a protracted run of betting gives the gambler no more chance of winning, or of recouping his losses, than he has in making a single bet.

Here, then, I bring the whole gambling fraternity—sharps and flats alike—about my ears. But, having courage of my opinions, I stand to my guns, and am prepared to hold my own against all comers. I will even go so far as to back my opinion in 'the good old English way' (why English?) to the extent of sixpence—beyond which I never go. Stay, though, I am speaking hastily. I did once back a horse for the Derby to the extent of a guinea. When I say that the horse was 'Maskelyne, by Magic—Mystery' (I believe that was the formula given by the sporting papers), perhaps I may be forgiven the extravagance for once. I have less compunction in mentioning the circumstance because the horse was 'scratched.' 'Maskelyne' was a rank outsider, and I did not even have 'a run for my money.'

But to return. I have said that gambling is essentially dishonest. This is no new statement, I am aware; but it is one upon which too much stress cannot be laid. A bet is almost universally considered to be a fair bargain. But is it? A *fair* bargain is one in which each person receives something which is of more value to him than that with which he has parted, or, at any rate, something which is of equal value. If either receives less value than he gives, that person has been swindled, and the fact of winning a bet signifies that one has deprived another of money for which no due consideration has been given. The gambler, of course, will argue that he *does* give an equivalent return for what he wins, in that he allows his opponent an equal chance of depriving him of a similar amount; that is to say, he purchases the right to cheat another by giving his opponent an equal chance of depriving him of a similar amount. In short, a bet is simply a mutual agreement to compound a felony. The fact that both parties to the transaction are equally in the wrong cannot possibly justify either. But it may be argued that no loser of a bet ever considers that he has been unjustly deprived of his money. That again is quite a mistaken notion. No man ever lost a bet who did not consider that he had every right to win it, otherwise he would never have made it. Therefore he is just as much robbed as though he had had his pocket picked. Because another will

cheat me if he has the chance, that does not justify me in cheating him if I can. If a man seeks to take my life, I may be justified in killing him, as a last resource, in order to protect myself; but, in a transaction involving merely pounds, shillings and pence, there is no necessity to fight a man with his own weapons. The act of cheating is not the weapon with which to combat the desire to cheat; yet this is what actually takes place even in so-called fair gambling.

It must be obvious to any one who will take the trouble to think over the matter, that chances which are fair and equal are a question of proportion rather than of actual amounts and odds. At first sight, however, it would appear that if a man stands an equal chance of winning or losing a certain amount, nothing fairer could possibly be imagined, from whatever point of view one may regard it. I venture to say, nevertheless, that this is not so. Suppose for the moment that you are a poor man, and that you meet a rich acquaintance who insists upon your spending the day with him, and having what the Americans call 'a large time.' At the end of the day he says to you, 'I will toss you whether you or I pay this day's expenses.' Such a proposition is by no means uncommon, and suppose you win, what is the loss to him? Comparatively nothing. He may never miss the amount he has to pay; but if you lose, your day's outing may have to be purchased by many weeks of inconvenience.

A bet of a hundred pounds is a mere bagatelle to a rich man, but it may be everything to a poor one. In the one case the loss entails no inconvenience, in the other it means absolute ruin. It must be granted, then, in matters of this kind, that proportion is the chief factor, not the actual figures. If you are with me so far, you are already a step nearer to my way of thinking.

Let us proceed a step further, and see how it is that a bet is necessarily unfair to both parties. The simple fact is that no two men can make a wager, however seemingly fair, or however obviously unfair, without at once reducing the actual value to them of their joint possessions. This can be proved to a demonstration. We will take a case in which the chances of winning are exactly equal, both in amount and in proportion to the wealth of two bettors. Suppose that your possessions are precisely equal in amount to those of a friend, and that your circumstances are similar in every respect. There can be, then, no disparity arising from the fact of a bet being made between you, where the chances of winning or losing a certain amount are the same to each. To present the problem in its simplest form, we will say that you each stake one-half of your possessions upon the turn of a coin. If it turns up head you win, if it falls 'tail up' your friend wins. Nothing could possibly be fairer than this from a gambler's point of view. You have each an equal chance of winning, you both stake

an equal amount, you both stand to lose as much as you can win, and, above all, the amount staked bears the same value, proportionately, to the wealth of each person. One cannot imagine a bet being made under fairer conditions, yet how does it work out in actual fact? You may smile when you read the words, but *you both stand to lose more than you can possibly win!* You doubt it! Well, we shall see if it cannot be made clear to you.

Suppose the turn of the coin is against you, and therefore you lose half your property; what is the result? To-morrow you will say, 'What a fool I was to bet! I was a hundred per cent. better off yesterday than I am to-day.' That is precisely the state of the case; you were exactly a hundred per cent. better off. Now, the most feeble intellect will at once perceive that a hundred per cent. can only be balanced by a hundred per cent. If you stood a chance of being that much better off yesterday than you are to-day, to make the chances equal you should have had an equal probability of being a hundred per cent. better off to-day than you were yesterday. That is obvious upon the face of it, since we agree that these questions are, beyond dispute, matters of proportion, and not of actual amounts.

Then we will suppose you win the toss, and thus acquire half your friend's property; what happens then? When the morrow arrives you can only say, 'I am fifty per

cent. better off to-day than I was yesterday.' That is just it. If you lose, your losses have amounted to as much as you still possess, whilst, if you win, your gains amount only to one-third of what you possess. The plain facts of the case, then, are simply that the moment you and your friend have made the bet referred to, you have considerably reduced the value of your joint possessions. Not in actual amount, it is true, but in actual fact, nevertheless ; for whichever way the bet may go, the loss sustained by one represents a future deprivation to that one far greater than the future proportional advantage gained by the other. The mere fact of one having gained precisely as much as the other has lost does not affect the ultimate result in the least. The inconvenience arising from any loss is always greater than the convenience resulting from an equal gain.

No man in his senses can be excused for making a bet of this kind, even if one merely considers the injustice inflicted upon himself; whilst in the case of a man who has others dependent upon him, such a proceeding could be nothing short of criminal. If by this time you do not see that gambling, in any form, means a possible loss of more than can be gained, all I can say is that you should turn socialist, being totally unable to protect or even recognise your individual interests. Civilisation is wasted upon you. Properly speaking, if you gamble fairly you are a flat ; if you gamble unfairly you

are a sharp : one or the other you must be. To be a wise man, and an honest man, you cannot gamble at all.

Some of course will meet me half-way, and admitting the truth of all I have put forward, will say, 'Yes, that is all very well, but no gambler ever does stake half his possessions upon a single bet ; therefore the proportion which any individual wager bears to his entire property is infinitesimal.' That, again, is perfectly true ; but I cannot see nor have I ever met with any one who could show me what difference can possibly exist between a small number of bets for a large amount, and a large number of bets for small amounts. Then comes in the third fallacy I have mentioned. 'The chances,' some will say, 'are bound to equalise themselves in the long run, and then one can neither win nor lose.' Dear, good, simple-minded souls ! The *proportion* of gains to losses, I grant, will become more equalised in an infinite number of bets where the probabilities are always equal ; but the amount which may be lost, and the proportion it bears to the belongings of the bettor, may ever *increase* with the infinity of the bets.

Suppose, for instance, two men toss up a coin ten times, and stake a pound upon the result of each toss. We will say that one of them loses nine times, and wins only once. He has lost four-fifths of the amount he has staked in the aggregate ; but what does it amount to? Merely eight pounds. But suppose they go on tossing

for ten thousand times, and that the same player loses only a hundredth part of the amount he has staked during the whole time, he wins ninety-nine times for every hundred losses. The proportion lost is infinitely less than in the former case, yet the actual amount is one hundred pounds. Let the throws be continued to a million times, and suppose the player loses only a thousandth part of what he has staked from beginning to end, his losses will amount to exactly *one thousand pounds.*

To talk of an infinite number of bets equalising the chances is sheer nonsense ; it simply equalises the *ratio* of the gains to the losses. The actual amounts won or lost may increase indefinitely. At the same time the player's original wealth does not vary ; and the man who has a thousand pounds may as well lose it in one throw as in a million—better, in fact, as he will waste less time over it.

I have tried to make this point somewhat clear, because it is one upon which even the most scientific gamblers—if one may use the term—are more or less befogged. They all think that, if they only keep on long enough, they are sure to win, or at any rate to recoup their losses : but the life of any man is too short to be certain of any such result, even in fair gambling—and most gambling is not fair. The punter, of course, after the manner of his kind, will differ from me in this last statement. He is of opinion that the odds in ordinary

betting *are* fair. Well, if that is so, I should like to know who keeps the bookmakers. I know *I* don't, and I know the punter *does*. If he is satisfied, so are the 'bookies'; and certainly other people have no cause to complain. The bookmaker, above all people, makes an infinite number of bets, and therefore, theoretically, he should neither win nor lose; but somehow he contrives to 'live and move and have his being.' Those who assist in maintaining him should best know how he manages it, but they don't seem to realise it.

The absolute immorality of gambling—the desire to obtain money to which one has no right—in any form is beyond dispute; and the sooner this fact is generally recognised, the better it will be for the world at large. There are some, of course, in whom the passion is ingrained, and from whose natures it can never be wholly eradicated. But everyone should clearly understand that the vice is as reprehensible in proportion to its magnitude as that, for instance, of either lying or stealing.

In an earlier chapter of this book I have said that directly a man becomes a gambler he also becomes a person whose honesty is open to suspicion. This may appear to be a somewhat harsh and sweeping assertion, but I maintain that it is absolutely justified by the facts which come under my notice almost daily. As an example of the laxity (to use no stronger term) which gradually undermines the moral nature of the gambler,

however conscientious he may originally have been, I may quote the following instance.

A few days ago a friend of mine, who belongs to a West End Club, was discussing the subject of gambling with a fellow member. In course of conversation he put the query, 'If you detected a man in cheating at the Club, what should you do?' To this the other replied. 'I should back his play; and then, after the game was over, I should make him give me half his winnings.' This is what gambling had done for a presumably honest 'Club man.'

With reference to the numberless systems of which one hears now and then, which are supposed to provide a certain means of enabling any gambler to win, despite the chances and changes of fortune, it may be as well to say a few words. These 'martingales,' as they are called, are always intended for use, more especially in the great gambling-houses of Monte Carlo and elsewhere.[1] Some

[1] A friend of mine, who has just recently paid a visit to Monte Carlo, describes a method of cheating the bank which came under his notice during his stay in that hallowed spot. He observed, one evening, a man standing by a roulette-table, who persistently put down a five-franc piece upon the winning number, after it had been declared. Of course, the 'croupier' never failed to detect the manœuvre, and removed the stake. The fact which passed unnoticed, however, was that a gold coin, value twenty francs, lay hidden beneath the silver one as it was put down. Being commanded to take up the five-franc piece, the man did so without hesitation; but the gold piece remained on the table among the other stakes. When the winnings were paid by the bank, that

of them, I should say, are as old as gambling itself; others are of comparatively recent invention; but, one and all, they are systems by means of which any amount of money may be won, and any number of banks may be broken—on paper. There is the trouble, they are useless in practice. They really look so promising, however, that it is very difficult to convince some people of their futility. But the fact remains that these systems have been in operation for generations, and never yet has a gaming establishment been ruined by their aid. This ounce of experimental proof is worth many pounds of reasoning. Sometimes, of course, the martingale will answer its purpose splendidly for a while; but, sooner or later, the inevitable crash comes, when the system breaks down, and the gambler is ruined. The great defect of all these devices is that, although they may promise a constant succession of comparatively small gains, there is always the chance of making a very heavy loss. This chance, of course, appears to the gambler to be so remote as to be unworthy of consideration; but, alas! that apparently remote chance is the rock upon which generations of punters have split. It always turns

particular coin was claimed by a confederate as being his stake, and was paid accordingly. In roulette, the winning number receives 35 times the amount staked; therefore the conspirators netted 700 francs each time they succeeded in this little operation. I should think the bank would not be long in discovering a robbery of this kind, if it were very frequently perpetrated.

up eventually, and then the bank recovers all it has lost, and in all probability a great deal more.

The simplest form of martingale, and one which is typical of them all, however much more complicated or 'improved' they may be, is the one which consists of the practice of doubling the stake after every loss. For instance, at rouge-et-noir the gambler may stake a sovereign and lose it. The next time he stakes two sovereigns, and, if he loses, his third stake will be four sovereigns. By pursuing this system it is obvious that, whenever he does win, he will gain a sovereign over and above his losses. Having won he will begin again with a sovereign and double his bets each time, until he wins as before. It would seem, then, that there must be a constant influx of sovereigns to the gambler; and so there may be for a time, but it will not last. In fact, he may be ruined at the very first sitting. This is how it happens. The success of the system depends upon the assumption that the chances must, sooner or later, turn in favour of the player; they cannot be against him for ever, so he must win in the end. That is what he thinks. But what he loses sight of is the fact that long spells of ill-luck are particularly common. It is quite an ordinary thing for a player to lose twenty times in succession; and meanwhile the amount of the stakes has been increasing after the manner of the familiar problem in arithmetic, wherein the nails in a horse's shoes play so prominent a part.

The fact is, if the player has lost eleven times, his twelfth stake will amount to £2,048. Obviously, then, a very short run of bad fortune will either cause the player to lose all his available money, or bring the stake up to the amount beyond which the bank will not allow any single bet to be made. What becomes of the martingale then? Ask of the winds.

And thus it is with all these systems. Their inventors fully believe in them, until they learn from bitter experience that they have overlooked the one weak point, the fallacy underlying the whole operation. Wherever there is a chance of making a number of small gains, there is always a chance of sustaining one great loss, which will swallow up many hundred times the value of any single stake. From this unfortunate circumstance there is no escape, no matter how ingenious the system may be, and notwithstanding any amount of infallibility it may appear to possess. A mathematician would demonstrate the folly of relying upon any martingale, and lay his finger upon the weak points in a few minutes. In short, these things one and all provide a means of winning which is just about as reliable as the advice given by the 'Old Pard' in 'My Sweetheart,' whose dying words were, 'Always copper the Queen on the last turn.' This, of course, was intended to refer to the game of faro. One may suppose that when the Queen remained in the dealing-box until the last turn, his

experience had been that it always turned up for the bank, and hence his advice to 'copper.' Another person's experience might have been just the opposite, and in that case the advice would be quite the contrary. Everything of this kind hinges upon superstition, and a belief in good and bad luck. When a 'lucky' gambler wins, his acquaintances express no surprise; they consider his good-fortune to be part and parcel of his nature. When he begins to lose, they suffer not a whit more astonishment, because such luck as his could not possibly last. The theories in each case are utterly at variance with one another, but the absurdity of the position never seems to reveal itself to the gambling intellect. The ultimate fate of the confirmed gambler, however fortunate he may be for a time, has always been, without exception, ruin and destitution. That is the only result ever achieved by the punter in the end.

So much, then, for 'fair gambling.' As to the blacker side of the question, as revealed in this book, what can be said of it, or what need be said of it? The reader may draw his own conclusions, which will doubtless vary according to the fact of his being either a sharp or a flat. The sharps will, unquestionably, be among those who are most anxious to see what disclosures are made herein; let us hope they will be satisfied with the thoroughness of the revelations. It would be a pity to disappoint them. On the other hand, the flats will find much food for thought in these pages. They must not

run away with the impression that by mastering the details thus put before them they will render themselves proof against sharping. If they imagine anything of the kind they will become simply 'fly flats,' and that will not improve their chances very much if they fall into the hands of an expert. Apart from the impossibility of giving every device employed by all the sharps in existence, it must be remembered that fresh trickeries are continually being invented, though it may be many years before new means of cheating can be devised which will prove so effective as those enjoyed by the sharp at the present day. He is generally equal to the occasion, however, and has his own individual methods of working; very often methods of which even his brother-sharps are ignorant, and which die with him. We can only hope that this book will be the means of opening the eyes of his dupes, and of rendering the chances of success in cheating less than they have been hitherto.

But we cannot hope that the sharp will find *no* dupes in the future; that is altogether too much to expect. As long as the world is principally composed of rogues and fools, so long will there be 'sharps and flats.' 'Surely the pleasure is as great in being cheated as to cheat,' but the profit does not apportion itself in the same manner. The sharp continually profits by his experience, but the flat—never.

At any rate, I have done the best I can to put

forward a clear account of the methods of swindling at games of chance and skill which are adopted at the present day. At the same time I have tried to indicate the best means of avoiding being cheated. It only remains for the reader to make the best use of the information given. I have no fear that, in writing what I have, I shall be accused by sensible people of assisting those sharps who may not know all that is here published. The resources of these men are always equal to their necessities; they can only cheat, at the worst, and the sharp will always find means of cheating so long as he can find dupes. Besides, this book will tend to make his dupes as wise as himself, and should have the effect of rendering them scarce.

Having published such information as I have been able to acquire, I have no intention of relaxing my vigilance in keeping a look-out for fresh developments and new devices. Having put my hand to the plough I shall not turn back; and, after me, I have every reason to believe that my son will continue the work. He has taken the liveliest interest in the production of this book; and, indeed, the whole of the illustrations are by him, with the exception of the frontispiece, which is by my esteemed and talented friend, Alfred Bryan.

Here, then, I will leave the work for the present, trusting that I have, in some measure, succeeded in metaphorically flattening the 'sharps' and sharpening the 'flats.'

POSTSCRIPT

WHILST this book is still in the press, an article on 'Science and Monte Carlo,' by Professor Karl Pearson, has appeared in the (monthly) 'Fortnightly Review.' This article deals with the game of roulette, and is one which may be commended to the perusal of all who may have any pet theories in connection with chance and luck. It constitutes, in fact, a very serious impeachment of the validity of all accepted theories of chance; so serious, indeed, that one stands amazed at the discrepancies which are revealed, and their having remained so long unnoticed. There appears to be no way out of the difficulty Either roulette is not a game of chance, or the doctrines of chance are utterly wrong.

It appears from Professor Pearson's investigations, that in a given number of throws the results shown by the "even-money" chances are fairly in accord with the theory as a whole. That is to say, the odd and even numbers, the red and black, turn up respectively in very nearly equal proportions. Also the 'runs' or sequences of odd or even are such as would not give rise to any

conflict between theory and practice. But the astounding fact is that the 'runs' or successions of red or black occur in a manner which is utterly at variance with theory. Why this should be so, and why 'red and black' should thus prove to be an exception to the theory, whilst 'odd and even' is not, passes the wit of man to comprehend.

In one of the cases quoted by Professor Pearson, 8,178 throws of the roulette-ball are compared with a similar number of tosses of a coin, and both results are checked against the theoretical probabilities. In tossing a coin or throwing a roulette-ball 8,178 times, theory demands that the number of throws which do not result in sequences—that is to say, throws in which head is followed by tail, or red by black—should be 2,044. Those are the probabilities of the case. But the actual results were as follows :—

Theory	2,044
Roulette	2,462
Tossing	2,168

There are too many single throws in each case, but the results given by tossing were much nearer the theoretical proportion than in the case of the roulette. Proceeding a step further, we find that the sequences of two work out thus :—

Theory	1,022
Roulette	945
Tossing	1,056

Here the figures given by roulette are far too small. This is found to be the case with sequences of three and four also. When we come to sequences of five, however, the numbers stand :—

Theory	128
Roulette	135
Tossing	120

In this case, the roulette is nearer the mark than the tossing ; and from this point onward through the higher sequences, roulette gives numbers which are far too high. For instance, in sequences of eight, theory says that there should be 16, but roulette gives 30. In sequences of eleven theory says 2, but roulette gives 5. Arriving at sequences of twelve, the figures are :—

Theory	1
Roulette	1
Tossing	1

Here all the results are in accord.

This is only one instance out of several recorded by Professor Pearson ; in every case the results being similar. That only one instance of such abnormal variation should occur is, theoretically, well nigh impossible ; but that there should be three or four such cases in the course of a single twelvemonth is nothing short of miraculous. The chances against the occurrence of such events are enormous ; and yet every case investigated shows the

same kind of result. Truly this must be another example of the malignity of matter.

The practical outcome of these investigations is to emphasise the utter futility of any scheme of winning at roulette based upon the law of averages or the doctrines of chance. It is more than likely, in my opinion, that further analysis of the records of Monte Carlo would reveal similar discrepancies in other departments of the game.

Personally, I fail to see how the devotees of the 'Higher Statistics' will contrive to meet the difficulty here presented. Why roulette should obey the laws of chance in some respects and not in others, is incomprehensible from any point of view whatever. One is driven to the conclusion that human experience and human statistics are upon too limited a scale to form a sufficient basis upon which to found either the proof or disproof of any universal theory. The only refuge appears to be that, given eternity, all events, however improbable, are possible.

It is to be hoped that Professor Pearson will find an opportunity of continuing his researches in this direction, for the subject promises to be one of exceeding interest. Of course, it may be objected that the few instances given are insufficient to affect the theory materially; but, as the Professor says of one of his instances, had roulette been played constantly on this earth, from the earliest

geological times to the present day, such an event might be expected to happen only once. Those who believe that an infinite number of bets, where the chances are fair and equal, can result in neither loss nor gain, should ponder this carefully. If the doctrines of chance can fail in one case, they can fail in others. At best, they are but a broken reed, and those who trust to them should beware the risk that is thereby entailed. Above all, the punter should bear in mind that, whatever theory may say or practice apparently demonstrate, the fact that any given event has happened so many times in succession makes not the slightest particle of difference to its chances of happening again, If one tossed a coin a hundred times, and it turned up 'head' every time, that would not in any way lessen its chance of turning up the same way at the next throw. The figures given in the article above referred to are neither more nor less than an illustration of this very palpable truth, extraordinary as they undoubtedly are when viewed in the light of theory.

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